

# The Freeman

VOL. III. No. 71.

NEW YORK, 20 JULY, 1921

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## CURRENT COMMENT.

THE declaration of peace with Germany got little attention, in part because on the day after the President signed it, the newspapers were full of the great prize fight, and also in part because it was a very perfunctory and belated affair. If it had been made about two-and-a-half years ago, which was the proper time to make it, the resolution might have been worth some comment. Coming now, however, it deserves notice only on account of its coincidence with the tariff-bill, which is a straight declaration of commercial and industrial war, not only with Germany but with the world at large. Logically, there could hardly be a greater absurdity than this of making a formal declaration of peace with a belligerent country and at the same time setting up a fiscal blockade against the products of that country's industry. Yet people hold to the notion that political government is useful to the general good, and has enough rationality about it to deserve respect.

THE House tariff-bill has been completed under the sponsorship of Representative Fordney. There is no use in our saying much more than that it is about what one would expect from the general intelligence and collective character of the present House of Representatives. We have of late gone quite thoroughly into the matter of tariffs, and need not now serve our readers with a dish of "cauld kail made het again." The bill raises the average customs duty to about fifty-five per cent, as against forty-four per cent under the Dingley tariff, and sixty-six under the Payne-Aldrich tariff. The bill represents ignorance, stupidity and viciousness in, we should say, about equal measure. It will be a focal point of international ill will. Under it, the petty domestic consumer will be robbed daily from dawn to dark. If the American people want that sort of thing, there is no doubt that they are getting precisely the sort of thing they want. They will notice it in the tendency of prices, the quality of commodities and in many other interesting ways. Very well, ladies and gentlemen, you would have it. Your fine majestic vote for the Republican party was an effective and deserved rebuke for the Wilson Administration, but it will cost you a deal of money. If you are bound to be robbed by privilege, what after all does it matter whether the agents of privilege call themselves Democrats or Republicans?

POOR Mr. Fordney is very hard put to it to justify his tariff-bill. The best he has been able to do, so far, is to fall back on the antediluvian line of talk about the protection of American labour. For cheapness, flimsiness and utter poverty, this is perhaps the most notable of all the stock humbugs about protectionism. We observe with interest that there are a few questions which Mr. Fordney, in all his enthusiasm for a revival of American industry, does not answer. If we do not buy in foreign markets, how can we sell? Does the new tariff operate in favour of such buying, or against it? How can foreign countries pay the debts they owe us, except by sending us goods? Does the new tariff make it easier for them to send us goods, or make it harder? If these foreign countries do not pay their debts, what will be the effect on the American taxpayer? When Mr. Fordney and Mr. Mondell get around to discussing these questions, we shall begin to have more respect than we now have for the sincerity of their devotion to American labour and American industry.

It is President Harding himself, however, who utterly gives away the show. He opposes a tariff on oil and has written a letter to Mr. Fordney, protesting against the proposed duty of thirty-five cents a barrel on crude oil and twenty-five cents a barrel on fuel oil. He says: "The oil-industry is so important to our country, and our future is so utterly dependent upon an abundance of petroleum that I think it is vastly more important that we develop an abundance of resources rather than temporary profit to a few producers who feel the pinch of Mexican competition." From a hide-bound old protectionist, isn't that neat? For the word *petroleum*, substitute the name of any other commodity, and for the word *Mexican*, substitute the name of a country competing in the production of that commodity; and then ask Mr. Harding why not. If petroleum, why not wheat, steel, wool? Why not all three, or why not all commodities in general? Mr. Harding simply says in effect, as General Hancock said in so many words, that the tariff is a local issue; and Mr. Harding's local issue is an oil-burning naval fleet.

MUCH has been said in the press lately about President Harding's impatience with Congress. That body, it seems, has incurred the Presidential displeasure by occupying itself with legislation which was not included in Mr. Harding's agenda when he called the special session. The President wanted Congress to pass an emergency-tariff bill, a permanent tariff-bill, and a tax-revision bill, and then adjourn; but Congress, having assembled, proceeded to interest itself in other matters. It passed a whaling big navy bill, with the much-disputed provision concerning disarmament; then it turned its attention to the peace resolution; and now the Senate has given the President immediate cause for exasperation by voting to give right of way to the bonus bill, which will mean an enormous increase in taxation. Meanwhile the permanent tariff-bill, which promises quite as much of an increase in its way, must apparently cool its heels outside, while there are no apparent signs of Congressional concern over the one bill which more than any other interests the people of the United States, viz., the bill for tax-revision.

WASHINGTON correspondents make much of what they consider indications that the President is going to "take the helm." The tone of the dispatches seems to imply



that this is as it should be; that it is, indeed, part of the President's business to exercise a firm control over the actions of House and Senate. One wonders whether the correspondents have ever read the Constitution. Mr. Harding as monarch might do very well, as monarchs go; but there is no place for a monarch in the scheme of government devised by the founding fathers. If the correspondents would take the time to refresh their memories by a re-reading of our fundamental law, they would discover the almost forgotten fact that the Executive and Congress were established as co-ordinate and independent branches of the government, and that neither is answerable to the other. Mr. Harding was elected under the Constitution, and he was elected as President, not as King. This may or may not be unfortunate, but it is the fact. As President, he has no warrant in law to exercise the slightest domination over the legislative branch of the Government; such domination as he may exercise he can exercise only by free consent of Congress.

THUS, although the President may call Congress in special session, he can not tell it what to do. It may, if it chooses, sit throughout the session with its feet upon its desk, doing nothing at all; a procedure which would undoubtedly prove an excellent thing for the country. The President, in his capacity of Executive, would be powerless to interfere. The individual members would simply have to explain matters to their constituents at the next election. For our own part, if we were, which God forbid, a member of Congress, we should much prefer having to explain such a use of our time to the necessity of defending the naval-appropriations bill, or the permanent-tariff bill about which the President is so anxious. In this connexion we should like to suggest to the Republican Congressmen among our readers—if any there be—that if their party is really interested in retrieving its reputation before the next election it would do very well to turn a deaf ear to the President's strictures, repeal the emergency-tariff law, and pass the four bills introduced by Representative Keller for revising our system of Federal taxation. Having made this excellent record, they then could not better serve their country than by going home and taking a long vacation.

PRESIDENT HARDING has at last called a conference of the Allied Powers to deal with the matter of disarmament. This, we guess, will put a great deal of heart into our liberal friends and also give the taxpayers new ground of hope; and these are worthy objects. We shall see what the conference comes to, however, before we indulge in enthusiasm. The same sort of thing has been tried so often in times past that we do not feel the same hopefulness that our liberal friends feel, or that we ourselves used to feel *calidus juvenia*, when we were young and green. There is no harm in expressing a pious hope, and we accordingly do so. There is no harm in expressing our belief that disarmament would accord well with Mr. Harding's personal wishes and convictions, and we do unreservedly believe it. But as we have said often before, as long as landlordism continually compels the exportation of capital at wholesale, we do not see how disarmament can take place. Perhaps some agreement about the limitation of armament can be arrived at, but we doubt even this; that is, an honest agreement, honestly made under an honest intention. We do not begrudge our liberal friends any entertainment that they can get out of hopefully fiddling with the matter of disarmament, but to us it seems much like trying to dam the Mississippi with a three-tined fork.

EVERY now and then, some event of minor importance strikes a light amidst surrounding gloom, and illuminates for a moment the profound differences which separate radicalism from liberalism. The publication of Mr. Hughes's gloss upon the earlier proclamation of withdrawal from Santo Domingo is such an event. In com-

menting upon the original proclamation and upon conditions in Santo Domingo generally, we have remarked that the troubles of the islanders did not begin with the present military occupation, but with the establishment of an American financial protectorate over the country some fifteen years ago; we have called attention to the fact that this protectorate has already involved, not only the present military excursion into the island, but several previous ones; and we have intimated that by selling more Dominican securities in the United States, and by widening the scope of American financial control for the protection of these securities, the American Military Government has not lessened the likelihood of re-intervention in the future; in short, we have done our best to exhibit the internals of this situation, and we can not see that Mr. Hughes's *communiqué* alters it in any essential respect. However, the New York *Nation* has accepted the issuance of this document as a step in the right direction; in fact the *Nation* is downright pleased to learn that "when the proclamation stated . . . that the Dominicans were expected to ratify all acts of the Military Occupation, it was *merely* 'to insure the recognition of the validity of the financial obligations incurred' by it." Needless to say, the italics are ours; they emphasize our utter failure to grasp the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

DURING the past week, some of us have been listening to a heavy, thudding sound in the distance, as ominous as the stony footfalls of Dunsany's Gods of the Mountain. We have surmised that Mars was in harness again, walking up and down, waiting. A few days ago, when the crunching footfalls were more distinctly audible than they are at the moment, we saw no evidence of any sort of activity on the part of the American people which could possibly prevent a war with Mexico. American oil-plants at Tampico had been closed down, in protest against the new export-levy of the Mexican Government; thousands of Mexicans had been thrown out of work, and violence was, and still is, imminent; American cruisers were ordered into the harbour to protect American rights; and everybody hereabouts waited patiently to see what would happen next.

It was perfectly obvious that if rioting did not begin of itself, as it often does under similar conditions in this country, the petroleum-companies could easily provoke it, with its natural consequences in the way of an American bombardment and debarkation and a free-for-all fight. It was obvious, too, that such an affair could easily be used as a pretext for war. Yet everybody looked on quite calmly while this mess bubbled and bubbled and threatened to boil over. It may be that most of the people of this country want a war with Mexico; sometimes one thinks so, after listening to a smoking-car conversation on the subject of "cleaning up the Greasers." On the other hand, it is quite certain that a great many people do not want this war, which still stands so near to us. Why, then, did they not do something a week ago? What more will it take to move them to action? Is it possible that they realize at last that righteousness and brotherly love are wellnigh impotent, when a system of armaments and monopolies makes war the accepted thing under certain conditions, and leaves it in the power of the monopolists themselves to create these conditions?

CONSPICUOUS upon the list of new arrivals from foreign parts, is the name of Mr. Frederick W. Stevens of Peking, China, the foreign representative of the American banking-group in the Chinese consortium. In some quarters, the return of Mr. Stevens to our shores has been interpreted as an indication that the Financial Expeditionary Forces of the United States are being withdrawn from the territory of the Chinese Republic. Mr. Stevens says, however, that he is simply on leave of absence, and we are inclined to agree with him. We do not believe that the consortium has failed. We have not yet heard of the



Chinaman who would speak a good word for it; but we do not believe that it has failed. American bankers have been for several years in whispered consultation with American politicians, and Allied bankers with Allied politicians, and all of them with each other. In the process, something good has been hatched; not good for China, but good for somebody. When the snapping turtle gets hold of something good, he doesn't turn loose till it thunders; and in China, as well as in America, the storm is still afar off.

For the first time since the Easter-week rebellion there is peace in Ireland. The truce arranged on 8 July between His Majesty's forces and the commanders of the Irish Republican Army, must seem to the terror-ridden Irish populace like relief from a prolonged nightmare. Speaking of the truce, we are not well versed in the fine points of diplomatic usage, but it looks to us as if the action of the Crown forces in signing such an agreement with the commanders of the Irish army amounted to an implicit recognition by His Majesty's Government of the existence of the Irish Republic.

Our impression is that the Irish majority has been placed in a hard position. If Mr. de Valera had refused outright to treat with the British Government, he would have taken upon himself and his followers the responsibility before public opinion for the further campaign of terror which the British Government is threatening to launch. On the other hand, now that he has agreed to meet Mr. Lloyd George in order to discuss the basis upon which a conference may be held, the press of England and this country is so busily creating a public expectation of peace, that a refusal to come to terms with England will probably be as harmful to the Irish cause as would have been a point-blank refusal to entertain Mr. Lloyd George's proposal. Mr. de Valera has handled the situation in a way which should satisfy the most ardent republican. While agreeing to discuss the possibilities of peace, he has never allowed himself to be put in the position of a mere leader of an Irish faction: he has held steadily to the position that he speaks as the President of the independent Irish Republic and can discuss peace with England only as the Executive of one nation treating with the Executive of another. But if he persists in this attitude, and it is hard to see how he can consistently do otherwise, it looks as if the wily Mr. Lloyd George will still have manoeuvred him into the position of seeming to invite further hostilities against his fellow-countrymen.

As far as we can see, there is no good reason for continuing to quarter several thousand American troops upon the German population. There is something anomalous in our keeping an army on foreign soil under the terms of a treaty to which we are not a party; and the reluctance of the War Department to give up what it evidently considers a good thing, is hardly sufficient reason to protract a military occupation of such doubtful legality. Now that this country is at last officially at peace with Germany, it is to be hoped that our Government will decide to leave the Watch on the Rhine to those countries who have, or think they have, some practical interest to be served thereby, and will relieve the German people of our share in an expense which is said to total more per annum than the cost of their Government's entire pre-war military establishment.

THE old prison-ship "Success," the oldest ship afloat, is now doing duty as a peripatetic exhibit of the horrors formerly inflicted under the British penal code. This is a first-class public service, and we are glad to hear that the ship has been visited by something over fifteen million persons. The newspapers, too, have furthered the good cause by publishing pictures of some of the implements of torture used on board the "Success," and by carrying a great deal of descriptive matter. It is almost incredible that not half a century has elapsed since the

"Success" was in commission. In fact, one man, a Negro ninety years old, who in his youth spent fourteen years as a convict on the "Success," recently went over the ship as a visitor! Thus in the life-time of one man we have put behind us the days when one could be condemned to seven years of appalling torture for stealing a sixpence, a pork-pie, or for organizing a labour-union.

THE criminal code and all its works and ways are still an unmitigated evil, and many fearful things are still done under its sanction; but no one can visit the "Success" without getting an encouraging sense that matters are not half as bad as they used to be in the days of our fathers. Some day, under a free society, when men are able to be as good as they want to be and know they should be, people will be looking back at our imprisonments, third-degrees, electrocutions, hangings, and the general work of our law-courts, with the same wonderment that we of the present day display towards the enormities exhibited by the "Success." How exceedingly odd, they will say, to live in a society so unintelligent as to put human beings to such grotesque and profitless uses! It might conceivably take no more than another generation to bring this about.

THE United States now has nearly one-half of what gold there is in the world, and more coming every day. For the last six months, the average monthly gain has been about \$73 million. Meanwhile the condition of international exchange has not improved; in fact, it is as bad now as it has been since the first week in January. When we acquire the other half of the world's gold, therefore, what shall we do with our accumulation? Shall we put it on exhibition somewhere, or melt it up into gew-gaws? We shall not be able to buy anything with it, obviously, nor yet can we eat it. Might we not, perhaps, make it into a monument to commemorate the day wherein this people of ours finally learned that payment in gold is no payment at all; that gold enters the country only as a commodity, like coal or lumber; and that goods can only be paid for in goods?

ON 6 October, 1918, John Munson, a liaison-runner, penetrated the German lines in the forest of Argonne, carrying the message that saved the "lost battalion." For this he received the Distinguished Service Cross, the *Croix de Guerre* and also the *Médaille Militaire*. On the night of 11 July, 1921, his body lay in the New York morgue whither it had been sent from Bellevue Hospital. The poor man had died of tuberculosis, alone and in great poverty. He had sold or pawned everything except his medals; these, after his death, were sent to a woman who kept a lodging-house where he had once lived for a time. The newspapers say naively that he never told the hospital attendants anything about his war-record. No wonder!

THE papers say that Lenin has put Trotzky in jail. What we should really like to know is, how Trotzky manages to get out so often.

THE work of the Lusk Committee remains unfinished; Little Red Riding Hood has not yet been placed on the *Index Expurgatorius*.

The editors can not be responsible for manuscripts submitted, but if return postage be enclosed, they will do all in their power to see that rejected manuscripts are returned promptly.

It is not to be understood that articles signed with a name, pseudonym, or initials necessarily agree with the opinion of the editors, either as to substance or style. They are printed because, in the editors' judgment, they are intrinsically worth reading.

Editors—Van Wyck Brooks, Walter G. Fuller, Clara La Follette, Francis Neilson, Albert Jay Nock and Gerold Tanquary Robinson. Published weekly by THE FREEMAN, Inc., B. W. Huebsch, President, 116 West 13th Street, New York, N. Y. Subscription rates, per year, postpaid; in the United States and Mexico, \$6.00; in Canada, \$6.50; elsewhere, \$7.00. Copyright, 1921, by THE FREEMAN, Inc., 20 July, 1921. Vol. III, No. 71. Entered as second-class matter March 12, 1920, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.



## TOPICS OF THE DAY.

### ARTEMUS WARD AS CRITIC.

AN excellent biography of Artemus Ward appeared last year from the capable pen of Mr. Don C. Seitz. It was a labour of love, well done in most essential respects, and the literary public of the country is under considerable obligation to Mr. Seitz for undertaking it. Ward died young; he was but thirty-three when finally mastered by a wasting tuberculosis. Thirty-three years leave but little material of the *pars magna fui* sort, so it is not surprising to find Ward's biography somewhat slight, and filled out with a good deal of padding, mostly supplied from his notebooks and published sketches. Nevertheless, slight as it is, this work was important and necessary, and one is glad to see it done. It suggests another work on Ward that would just now be especially timely; and Mr. Seitz's success as a biographer, as well as his affectionate regard for Ward's place in our literary history, intimates that he would be quite the one to take it up.

Artemus Ward (for it would be an affectation to speak of him by any other than his chosen pen-name) is known as a humorist, and equally well known for the sound stuff of wisdom and good sense that always, in a humorist of classical quality, carries the foam and bead of wit. As a critic of our society, however, he has never, we think, been appreciated. We have not yet read Mr. E. S. Nadal's essay on Ward, to which Mr. Seitz refers, so we may be wrong; Mr. Nadal would be likely to discern that quality. But if he did, he could not treat it fully in a single magazine-article; and besides, Mr. Nadal wrote many years ago, and the subject is one that will stand reviving once in each generation, at least. We hope, therefore, that Mr. Seitz will shortly give us a volume on Ward as a critic—it need not be a large one—and we envy him the fun that he will get out of producing it.

There seems to be an impression, though we can not vouch for it, that our American public is just now in a mood to take stock of itself. Mr. William Archer infers this, in part, from the extraordinary sale of Mr. Sinclair Lewis's novel, "Main Street." We have our doubts; we think that an American community reads Mr. Lewis's novel in no such self-conscious mood, but rather because it fancies that Mr. Lewis's shafts are aimed most particularly and venomously at some other community's Main Street. However, such books are undeniably read; Mrs. Wharton's new book, which it is a pleasure to praise, is "Main Street" done properly, done with insight and sympathy and a sense of responsibility to literature; and it too, we understand, is widely read. So, perhaps there may be something in the notion that Americans are in a self-critical mood. If so, it is quite the time to show that Ward was one of the best of critics, and to show how little there was in our collective life that escaped his eye.

We would not anticipate Mr. Seitz, even if it were in good taste to do so, because we do not think that we could offer him any competent suggestions. We believe, however, that if he undertakes such an essay, he will find that Ward cut a path in nearly every direction that our modern critics of society, especially our younger ones, have taken. Baldwinsville, Indiana, was the very original of Gopher Prairie. All the hardness, all the hideousness, the deformed and stunted sense of beauty, of social life, of religion and morals, the dogged, narrow, fantastic cleaving to convention, the intense inhospitality to ideas—all that forms the sub-

stance of Mr. Sinclair Lewis's vehement complaint, most of the *corpus vile* that Mrs. Wharton dissects so admirably—all this is to be plainly discerned under the transparent surface of the Baldwinsville sketches. One reads them and laughs heartily; reads them again (for who could help reading them again and yet again?) and says, Yes, this is life in an American community—and what a life! Who that has a ha'pennyworth of imagination has read the story of Ward's visit to Oberlin College without being able to put his finger on the essential failure in American higher education; that it is, as M. Renan said, not *serious*, that it can not possibly conduce to a collective life of richness, savour and depth? Who that has seen the country at war can get a more accurate sense of its incorrigibly superficial spirit, its vacillations, its fits of blowing hot and cold, its easiness under impositions, than is to be had from Ward's sketches of life during the Civil War? Can the modern critic who has taken due note of our crude general sentimentalisms and conventions find one that Ward has missed? We greatly doubt it.

Then too, the inimitable manner and style of his criticism, his temper, his shrewdness and benignity, reminding one of Chaucer—but if we keep on, we shall find ourselves infringing on Mr. Seitz's ground, in spite of our good intentions, and laying out a sort of syllabus for his essay; so we shall stop here. We believe, and we hope that Mr. Seitz agrees with us, that as the American people progress in objectivity, Ward will more and more securely take rank as a critic of society; and perhaps if he were brought out now in that capacity, the measure of his acceptance would also in some sort measure the present strength and tenacity of many popular illusions.

### FIRST THINGS FIRST.

A FINANCIAL writer on one of our Gargantuan contemporaries has discovered that "the ignorance prevalent everywhere concerning the workings of business, finance and economics, constitutes a national danger that ought to be combatted very earnestly" by political, educational and business leaders, in order to prevent the suffering masses from seeking a blind revenge. He has discovered that "there is dire need for intelligent, comprehensive, co-operative effort to spread through the land elementary education in economics, so that, instead of relatively few persons being able to understand why times like the present occur, the great majority of our 107 million people will blame fundamental economic causes rather than the capitalists."

If the daily press were free to undertake a serious discussion of these important matters, much of the prevailing ignorance might be dispelled; but even more could be accomplished if the public would insist upon the right of open controversy. Politicians, teachers and men of affairs are by no means agreed upon fundamental laws; and if they were, their wisdom would be thrown away upon people who have lost the power to think for themselves. No doubt the press is peculiarly responsible for the present ignorance, for it has applied the principles of monopoly to the presentation of facts, prevented free competition in the exchange of thought, and impoverished the minds of a spiritless public.

The writer above quoted does not venture to express an opinion regarding the nature of fundamental economic laws, but modesty has not prevented us from making attempts at definition, and we have tried to draw an intelligible distinction between the monopolist



and the capitalist, between forced competition and the freedom of action which the economists had in mind when they noted the beneficent results of competition in the world of human exertion. These distinctions are lost sight of by writers who are struck by the growth of combinations and trusts, and draw the conclusion that competition is, as one of them puts it, "for ever gone, consigned to the scrap-heap with the stagecoach, the hand loom and the horse-plough."

It would be unwise to accept this prophecy without inquiring whether the elimination of competition has been due to natural or artificial causes; whether it has tended towards a balance of social forces or towards an arrangement that is likely to be upset. When we speak of combinations, we think first of steel, coal, copper, oil, lumber, water-power, all of which, in the language of political economy, are classed as "land." Then comes transportation over the surface of the land, and finally the control of money and credit. The importance of land-monopoly in enterprises requiring large amounts of capital may be judged by the stress laid upon perpetual or long-term franchises; but the point is especially well made in the prospectus of an oil-venture that lies before us, from which we learn that "ownership of the land . . . is the key to all oil-profits." It is not only the marketing of oil that attracts investment, but the fact that "by its very discovery it creates far vaster quick property-values than those flowing from the actual production of oil," as the land for miles around the discovery is at once invested with "tremendous speculative possibilities." The speculation in land-values is the central fact of our economic life, and it is made possible by laws which are common to all civilized countries, but none the less open to criticism. If they are finally declared unjust and mischievous, the validity of existing combinations will be seriously affected; and if the legal privilege of exclusive land-ownership is cancelled, the combinations based on the possession of natural resources can not continue in their present form.

As competition in the use of the earth has been reduced by combination, competition for the opportunity to work has become intensified. But the victims are no more enlightened than their masters. Instead of trying to strike off their chains, they imitate the methods of monopoly and attempt in their turn to limit competition by trade-union regulations. So trust faces trust; neither side in the bitter struggle seeing that mutual service depends upon liberty of action, and that interference with liberty contracts the range of co-operative effort. No one will deny the advantages of combination in securing economies and increasing production, but that these advantages can be enjoyed without recourse to legal privileges is sufficiently indicated by the achievements of co-operative enterprise. Nor are they possible under the monopoly-system without serious attendant evils—gluts and famines, waste and high living-costs, to say nothing of the corrupt practices revealed by the Lockwood inquiry. Even the apologists of the trusts are shocked at the spectacle of food being deliberately destroyed because it can not be profitably marketed, or because of desire to keep up prices; and they offer regulation as the necessary counterpoise. So there is no end to the multiplication of laws. We first grant a private monopoly in the necessities of life, and having surrendered the responsibilities of free men, we call in the Government to protect us from the results of our own folly. But the bodies appointed to neutralize the effects of monopoly always fail, because, being human, they are liable to be influenced by the powerful

forces they seek to control; and not being omniscient, they can not know what is fair as between the intricate conflicting interests.

When the economists declared that competition was the life of trade, and was competent to determine prices with substantial justice, they were thinking of a world in which the individuals were free to act in their proper interests. They may not have understood the full meaning of freedom, but they saw that no one in the absence of compulsion need accept an unfavourable bargain; and it has yet to be shown that competition among free men will not do all that was claimed for it, however baneful it may be when unnaturally forced. Labour-unrest, race-hatred and wars are but part of the price exacted by monopoly, by the attempt to circumvent nature's impartiality. The repeal of restrictive laws would give full play to co-operation and would remove the fear of competition in a closed market. Employers' associations and labour-unions would no longer serve anybody's interest, racial animosity would lose its chief stimulus, and a basis would be laid for peaceful diplomacy.

Indeed it is idle to hope for genuine disarmament until this time arrives, and therefore one is pained to see the false hopes aroused by altruistic demonstrations that are so sure to lead to disappointment and discouragement as long as valid cause for conflict remains. Glad as we are to note the enthusiasm for international *rapprochement*, we can not shut our eyes to the fact that under cover of this emotional display, the privileged interests can the more easily stake out their claims, the bankers spread their nets, and the Governments which they control raise barriers to be battered down eventually by guns—all to the profit of the steel-trust, the powder-trust and their sister combinations. If the amount of energy now being expended on disarmament could be used to uncover and exhibit the legal privileges which create discord, we might hope for the beginning of a new era of prosperity and amity.

### BOHEMIA IN VACUO.

Nor long ago the editor of one of our Metropolitan dailies explored the manners and morals of Greenwich Village, and capped off his inquiry by asking whether any inhabitant of this quarter of New York City had yet painted or modelled or written any work of art that would be remembered ten years hence. We can not recall the exact language of the inquiry, though we think this statement does justice to its spirit, nor are we disposed to engage the editor in combat upon his own ground. One might, perhaps, permissibly call attention to certain peculiarities in the popular taste in matters of art; one might ask who it is that has the power to condemn a work of art simply by letting it slip from his memory; one might inquire what other quarter of the city or country is likely to fare better than the Village; one might even indeed run off the titles of several items of the art of Greenwich Village which one would say, if the editor will allow it, are quite certainly deserving of remembrance several years from now.

Yet it is not our purpose to follow on the trail of these proposals, for we are convinced that no good could come of this sort of criticism; and besides, we are perversely determined at the moment to discuss the quantity of the work done in Greenwich Village, rather than its quality. For some time we have had the notion that in proportion to the number of painters, sculptors



and writers who live in this quarter, the output in the way of works of art of any sort is astonishingly small. We can suggest no test for this notion except the test of experience, and experience has convinced us that there are in the Village a great many people who are more interested in being artists than in doing the creative work of art. They toil not neither do they spin; but they surround themselves with certain outward apparatus of toiling and spinning, and for them this is enough.

Our readers will perhaps confirm us in the belief that this sort of thing is new in America. Generally speaking, the very word "artist" has had an ill repute among us, and our painters and writers have been strongly impelled towards an outward conventionality, often inwardly reflected, which has tended to make them personally indistinguishable from the mass. Perhaps it was only natural, then, that the repression should finally produce a violent reaction which in many cases was not directed by any positive notion of "the good life," but simply by a negative desire to escape the restrictions of a life that seemed to be thoroughly evil. It was natural also that many of the *revoltés* should respond to familiar stimuli with actions which had no value in relation to any end or object of the actor himself; but were nothing more than unreasoned reversals of the accepted rules of conduct which happened to apply in each specific case. Somewhat in this fashion the life of freedom, so called, was fitted to the life of bondage as the cast fits the discarded mould, and new conventions were developed which were nothing more than negations of the conventions of respectability, and were often as restrictive as are these conventions themselves.

If this new sort of conventionality has been especially popular among the camp-followers of art, it is perhaps because they feel in a vague way that the creative artist must somehow escape from any restriction which he feels to be an actual check upon his work. Certainly it is true that the artist's way of life would be wholly incidental. For him the negation of old conventions is nothing, except in so far as it serves to lighten his cargo of non-essentials, and the new conventions of the Latin Quarter may conceivably prove to be no less burdensome than those that the Quarter has discarded.

The painters who do not paint and the writers who do not write have cleared and re-set the stage for a play that never comes off. They have somehow confused the processes of creation and negation; and have even circumscribed themselves with a new formalism of denial. In the place of the half-artist who looks and lives like a business man, they offer the *fainéant* who looks and lives like the artist of romance. If they have given a social approval to a tolerably inexpensive way of life, and have developed a limited market for the experimental work that others may do, these good results are incidental to a dissipation of energies that might well produce a quantitative renaissance in art and fill the vacuum left by discarded respectability with free work, instead of stuffing it with the sawdust of Bohemianism.

### UNDER A LEADEN SKY.

THE debacle of American Socialism, as it was revealed the other day at the Socialist convention, must have filled many a mind with many a furious thought. That any party dedicated to the cause of a radical change in society should have lost in the course of a year nine-tenths of its members, is a fact of extraordinary sig-

nificance; it is one that concerns everybody who believes in change of any sort; furthermore, it is not to be explained away in political terms. Granting that the Socialist ranks have been broken by the insurgent groups, it remains true that the same phenomenon has occurred everywhere else, and that elsewhere the main body has continued to march along, crippled indeed, but still visible: in this country the main body has virtually passed below the horizon, and at the same time the insurgent groups have failed to rise above it. American Socialism has crumbled, root and branch, like a mummy at the touch of air.

For a long time it has been evident that the American Socialist party was being artificially kept alive. It has borne no organic relation to the American labour-movement; it has evoked virtually nothing from the intellectuals in the way of an effective leadership; it has developed no characteristic technique, no methods, no forms, no ideals of its own. That under these conditions it should have crumbled sooner or later was inevitable. But who can fail to see that its fate is symbolic? We have witnessed the rise and fall of many parties that have been based upon an idea; a new party of this kind makes its appearance almost automatically every four years; a fresh group of leaders comes to the front, with a fresh banner and a fresh slogan; a hasty baptism takes place on the field of battle, as it were; and the liberal-progressive elements rally about the battering-ram and push for all they are worth at the Chinese wall of public opinion. The wall does not even vibrate. After a generation of these impulsive efforts, the parties of habit and custom are, as we see, more secure and complacent than ever: the rotundity of the rubber ball has triumphantly survived every dent. And the liberal-progressive intellectuals, save for knowing considerably more, not about America, but about Europe, than they formerly knew, are exactly where they were in the palmy days of *Harper's Weekly*.

This being so, it is evident enough that something is wrong somewhere. When people who are nothing if not progressive are totally unable to make any progress, when the tides with such appalling regularity wash out the traces of their labours, the sympathetic spectator is led to inquire whether it is not because they are building upon sand. No one doubts the existence in America of an immense fund of good will, of a desire for better things, of a Utopian disposition. Americans have even a passion for novelty; yet, strange to say, they never achieve anything new. If Americans rise to the occasion of every new progressive programme, it testifies to the voracity of their appetite; the fact, however, that, having risen to the occasion, they do not continue in one stay long enough to make a success of it, testifies to something else. The truth seems to be that the progressive public is animated not by clearly defined and firmly held personal convictions but by crowd-emotions and crowd-impulses, faintly tinged only with the vaguest personal desires. It rises *en masse*, but after it has risen, there is no individual stiffening to keep it up; it contains scarcely a handful of conscious, determined human beings who really know what they are about and mean to make a go of it, and so it sinks again precisely as it rose. The liberal-progressive movement is thus a tidal movement, determined by a quadrennial moon. On the other hand, the "occasion" is never one that acts upon it in such a way as to mitigate its crowd-aspect. In the first place, one does not form convictions at the eleventh hour: they are the fruit of long study, careful thought, and a slow



gestation. Convictions of this kind the leaders and instigators of the liberal-progressive movement lack themselves; consequently, when the moment comes they have nothing to offer the public. They offer, instead, slogans, shibboleths, phrases, ideas which they have borrowed from English liberalism, or Russian bolshevism, or Irish nationalism, or what not, and have frantically and impulsively put together the night before, as it were, hoping that they will work the wonders here which they have worked in the countries of their origin; they offer these, but, having themselves no clearly defined and firmly held convictions, they are unable to evoke any substantial personal response from the public. The leaders, in short, and in spite of their much-vaunted sophistication, are themselves in reality a part of the mob: a mob-minority in the midst of a mob-majority. They are thus literally the blind leading the blind.

These are the facts; and the question is, what is to be done about it? Obviously, there is much to be done in one sense; in another, in the usual sense, there is nothing to be done. Our liberal-progressive intellectuals are familiar with the writings of Mr. Wells: they will remember, then, how effectively, in one of his earlier stories, this author disposes of the importunate phrase, "For Gawd's sake, let's *do* something!" The situation is, if you will, desperate; but it has remained desperate for a very long time, and perhaps the best way to solve it now is to get the fever out of one's blood and reflect a little.

## II

The first reflection that comes to one's mind is that, in Europe, in spite of the chaos and disillusionment that has followed the war, the various parties and movements that are dedicated to the cause of a radical change in society continue in their work with unabated vigour. The difference in this respect between these movements and ours is indeed so striking that one can not help reflecting on it; and the more one reflects the more clearly one perceives that it is because the radical public in Europe is, relatively speaking and as compared with ours, not a crowd-public but an individualized public, and that the same thing is true, is proportionately more true, of its leaders. These leaders, unlike ours, have their clearly defined and firmly held personal convictions which they have not improvised for any particular occasion, but which they have worked out after years of patient thought. Their public, in turn, has its own mind also. When the "occasion" occurs, therefore, something else takes place than a love feast or an emotional orgy; there is an actual meeting of minds, of convictions, of intentions; the leaders and the public pull together, the public responding to the leaders, the leaders fertilizing the public; and one has, not a tidal movement, but a movement of human wills. This is as true of the Sinn Fein movement as of the movement of British labour, as true of Swedish Socialism as of Bolshevism in Russia. It is, that is to say, relatively true, and as distinguished from what is true of every American movement. When one has this, whatever one's aim, one's purpose, one's desire may be, one has something against which even the most devastating of wars are unable finally to prevail; and when one lacks this, one can not, in the strict sense, have any movement whatever.

In short, everything goes back to the measure of the personal consciousness of the individuals and the masses who are concerned. Where no personal consciousness exists, no conviction can exist; and where no conviction exists, all movement is illusory.

As one sees, then, there is only one thing to be done in this country by those who believe in change: and that is the awakening of the people. The reason why, in matters of this kind—in matters of civilization, that is—Europe is so far ahead of us, is that Europe has already been awakened. The European individual of whatever class is a conscious unit as the American individual is not; and if one were asked to say why this is so one would be obliged to answer that it is largely, very largely, because Europe has and has always had a literature. A propagandist literature, or a literature in the ordinary sense? A literature in the ordinary sense first; afterwards, a propagandist literature. "A man's a man for a' that"—till a people has had its Burns, it is incapable of profiting by its corn-law rhymers: till one has the popular individual consciousness, one has nothing upon which to work. But if, over and above this measure of popular individual consciousness upon which the success of every movement depends, and which Europe owes, more than to any other agency, to its poets, its novelists, its scientists, its philosophers—if, over and above this, one were to speak of these movements themselves, then one might ask: How could any of these movements have existed if they had not been formulated, if they had not been created, by writers? Take from Bolshevism, on the one hand Marx, and on the other Pushkin and his successors; take from Irish nationalism, on the one hand Thomas Davis, and on the other Mr. Yeats and Æ.; take from British labour, on the one hand Owen and Cobden, and on the other Morris and Messrs. Webb and Shaw—and what would be left? Much, no doubt; but certainly something very different and far less effective. Literature, in the widest sense of the word, is behind not only the general popular consciousness of the European masses but the specific popular consciousness of every one of its movements: it is the leaven which, above everything else, renders human nature susceptible of a deliberate cohesion and a corporate development. If human nature in America is not so susceptible, it is because we lack a living literature; for it goes without saying that the literature of other times and foreign countries acts, for the most part, and in any case effectively, only on the highly-developed few; and that for the many, thought and experience have to be re-kneaded in terms of their own lives and their own conditions.

To go back, then, to such spectacles as the collapse of American Socialism, there appears to be but one conclusion to be drawn from them: that until America has had its literary phase it will have nothing else. There is in this country no popular individual consciousness upon which to work; and on the other hand, there is in the progressive-liberal intellectuals no specific individual consciousness, or virtually none, to work upon it. These intellectuals offer the public three commodities: propaganda, which fans the emotions; facts, which, useful as they are and valuable as they ought to be, pass into one ear and out of the other; and opinions that might well lodge in the mind if there were any mind for them to lodge in, as there is not—which explains also the fate of the afore-mentioned facts and propaganda. Before any of these agencies can be effective we must have the consciousness, and before we can have the consciousness we must have that which awakens it; and who is to do this awakening if it is not the progressive-liberal intellectuals themselves?

So we come to our proposal, which is: that the great task of every capable individual who wishes to institute in this country the principle of growth is to *write*, to



write not as a propagandist but as a man, and as far as possible as an artist. What we need at present, what we can not dispense with, is a literature that will consist of one vast "Essay on Indifference," a literature that will play upon the public, that will ravish it, and sting it, and provoke it, that will harrow it and impregnate it and at the same time shape its desires, that will act like an acid upon mob-sentiment of every kind and like a charm upon the faculties of the individual. That first "Essay on Indifference" which Lamennais wrote a century ago and which, put forth as it was in the interests of the Roman faith, had its repercussions in every sphere of the spiritual life of France (to such a degree that Jaurès himself would have been a different man if it had not been written)—that essay was described by a competent contemporary observer as "an earthquake under a leaden sky." Has a great literary movement ever been anything else? To be sure, a great literary movement is not an easy thing to bring about; but, since that is the one thing necessary at present in America, it offers, to say the least, an interesting question upon which to exercise our minds. When it comes to writing books, real books, the kind of books that Thoreau described as "dangerous to existing institutions," we shall find that the building of skyscrapers is mere child's-play. But surely America is big enough and old enough now to attempt something a little difficult.

#### MAMERTO'S HAPPY THOUGHT.

(Translated by C. Grant La Farge from the Spanish of G. García-Arista y Rivera.)

WHEN the Brotherhood of Santo Cristo de la Columna, with its standard carried before it and its *mayordomo* at its head, arrived at the Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Pines, the first thing that the leader did was to cast a searching eye over the whole length of the esplanade where were assembled, according to the immemorial custom of the day, all the country folk of the neighbourhood, either singly or grouped in various religious brotherhoods. He was looking for the Fraternity of San Roque which, with his own fraternity, represented, on that great occasion, the village of Espigarrales. It cost the *mayordomo*, whose name was Mamerto, no little trouble to find the Brothers of San Roque, so many were the fraternities gathered there. What a sight it was! that great congregation of villages and brotherhoods, each with its own banner proudly waving and the figure of its holy Patron, borne upon a light litter, following behind the standard-bearer.

But, if the Brotherhood of the Column did manage to manœuvre itself to a position next to the Fraternity of San Roque, it was because there existed between the two orders, it must be confessed, a certain spirit of emulation, born of a devout rivalry, which stimulated them both to seek the greatest possible splendour in their religious life. On the present occasion—one must admit it—the devotees of San Roque had put it all over the worshippers of the Christ of the Column. The former were more numerous, they sang better, they were more dressed up, they carried better candles, and above all—here was the surprise that they had been keeping up their sleeve for the benefit of their rivals—the image of San Roque that they were carrying was a new one, glittering, showy, and, if not a marvel of art (for in this regard the San Roques were none too strong), it was certainly of great size, which as everybody knows is the important thing. "Because *Repacho!* seein's believin'," said the good brothers, "and that little old San Roque we used to have, it hardly stood up above the ground a bare handsbreadth; and that dog, it wasn't a dog, it was nothin' but a bunny rabbit; and that hat, it looked more like a toadstool; and the little cape, a mere hand-me-down! not even half good enough for a saint who, as a miracle-worker, has all the other saints beat for miles around. That is why, thanks be to God, we ordered this new image from Zaragoza . . . and there isn't another image that can compare with it." And they sang their new hymn, of which the words and music had been written by the sacristan of Espigarrales—the tune being of equal merit with the poetry:

Roque! Blessed Roque!  
Thou waterest our fields,  
When to droughty August

They begin to yield!  
And because of so much good,  
With thankfulness to please,  
Entirely new we've made thee . . .  
May it be for centuries!

As a result of all this, the triumph of the Fraternity of San Roque on the occasion of the pilgrimage to the Virgin of the Pines was complete.

#### II

"This state of things, *rediola!* can't stay like this," said poor Señor Mamerto to himself as he lay sleepless on the night following the pilgrimage. "It passes the limit. Here we are left behind by everybody and everything; we're too small to be seen." Then there was a long pause in his soliloquy, during which Señor Mamerto kept winking in an agitated manner, which was a sure sign in him that he was developing some great idea. At last he exclaimed, striking a blow with his fist upon the bed: "There, I've got it all thought out. . . . The Brotherhood's got plenty of money, and if it isn't enough, there's my own little wad! Those Roque boys are not going to get away with it next time. They carried out their plans very quietly, and now so will I. I'll work all alone, and in the Good Friday procession, we'll just see who will whistle loudest, San Roque or the Christ of the Column!"

As time pressed, the very next day, with all diligence and with the greatest secrecy, Señor Mamerto wrote to Zaragoza.

#### III

It lacked but a few days of Holy Week when, believing that the time had come to reveal his secret, Señor Mamerto called a meeting of the Brotherhood and spoke to them triumphantly thus: "I've been to Zaragoza, where an image-maker—*repacho!* the best they've got in the city—has made us a processional Christ of the Column. Believe me, it's goin' to make some stir the day we take him out. Our Lord is just exactly like he was speaking, and the two Jews that are whipping Him, they look like Jews all right! *Rediola*, they have the faces of the damned. As for size—it's as big as St. Christopher! It will put the little old San Roque in the shade! I hope that all our members, and that all the people generally, will be pleased with what I've done. We shan't have to take any more back talk from the Roque boys!"

Then Señor Mamerto proceeded to give details of his doings: he had gone in person to Zaragoza, because time pressed, and the image-maker had not been able to promise that the statue would arrive at the village on time. But as a result of his journey, all these difficulties had been settled. The only doubt remaining was that, with the train service being in such a disorganized state, goods arrived only when God willed. He had, therefore, had a brilliant idea: he had left orders with the maker of the statues that instead of sending the three figures by express, so that they would have to be articulated and mounted when they reached the village, he should put them aboard a passenger-train as travellers, buying for each of them a third-class ticket. Thus they would surely arrive on time! Now! he asked his friends in triumph, wasn't that a bright idea?

But to the astonishment of the *mayordomo* all his companions at the meeting disagreed with him. "It was all very well," said they, "to get a new processional statue, but wasn't it the height of irreverence to put Our Lord all mixed up and confused in the depths of a third-class carriage with a couple of Jews? That was too much for anyone. Really!"

Señor Mamerto humbly apologized for his carelessness and earnestly protested that he had not meant to be irreverent. He then quieted the minds of his friends by assuring them that he had already thought of a remedy which he was going to put into effect at once; and he went off immediately to the telegraph-office and sent the image-maker the following message: "When sending figures, please be careful to put Our Lord in second class."

#### IV

For the rest, everything went off smooth as silk; and what a triumph it was for Señor Mamerto on Good Friday . . . As for the Roque boys, it was a knock-out blow!

G. GARCÍA-ARISTA Y RIVERA.

#### CHEKHOV'S NOTEBOOK.

I RENTED a country-house for the summer; the owner, a very fat old lady, lived in the lodge, I in the great house; her husband was dead and so were all her children, she was left alone, very fat, the estate sold for debt, her furniture old and in good taste; all day long she reads letters which her husband and son had written to her.



Yet she is an optimist. When some one fell ill in my house, she smiled and said again and again: "My dear, God will help."

THERE is not a single criterion which can serve as the measure of the non-existent, of the non-human.

A PATRIOT: "And do you know that our Russian macaroni is better than the Italian? I'll prove it to you. Once at Nice they brought me sturgeon—do you know, I nearly cried."; and the patriot did not see that he was only gastronomically patriotic.

YEGOR the locksmith's clock at one time loses and at another gains exactly as if to spite him; deliberately it is now at twelve and then quite suddenly at eight. It does it out of animosity as though the devil were in it. The locksmith tries to find out the cause, and once he plunges it in holy water.

FORMERLY the heroes in novels and stories (e.g. Petchorin, Onyegin) were twenty years old, but now one can not have a hero under thirty to thirty-five years. The same will soon happen with heroines.

N. is the son of a famous father; he is very nice, but, whatever he does, every one says: "That is very well, but it is nothing to the father." Once he gave a recitation at an evening party; all the performers had a success, but of him they said: "That is very well, but still it is nothing to the father." He went home and got into bed and, looking at his father's portrait, shook his fist at him.

WE fret ourselves to reform life, in order that posterity may be happy, and posterity will say as usual: "In the past it used to be better, the present is worse than the past."

MY motto: "I don't want anything."

WHEN a decent workingman takes himself and his work critically, people call him grumbler, idler, bore; but when an idle scoundrel shouts that it is necessary to work, he is applauded.

WHEN a woman destroys things like a man, people think it natural and everybody understands it; but when like a man, she wishes or tries to create, people think it unnatural and can not reconcile themselves to it.

HE looked down on the world from the height of his baseness.

N., a retired Councillor of State, lives in the country; he is sixty-six. He is educated, liberal-minded, reads, likes an argument. He learns from his guests that the new coroner Z. walks about with a slipper on one foot and a boot on the other, and lives with another man's wife. N. thinks all the time of Z.; he does nothing but talk about him, how he walks about in one slipper and lives with another man's wife; he talks of nothing else. . . . Finally he has a stroke, his arm and leg are paralysed—and all this from agitation about Z. The doctor comes. With him too N. talks about Z. The doctor says that he knows Z., that Z. now wears two boots, his leg being well, and that he has married the lady.

I HOPE that in the next world I shall be able to look back at this life and say: "Those were beautiful dreams . . ."

THE squire N., looking at the undergraduate and the young girl, the children of his steward Z.: "I am sure Z. steals from me, lives grandly on stolen money; the undergraduate and the girl know it or ought to know it: why then do they look so decent?"

"I HAVE just married my third husband . . . the name of the first was Ivan Makarievitch . . . of the second Peter . . . Peter . . . I have forgotten."

THE writer Gvozdkov thinks that he is very famous, that every one knows him. He arrives at S., meets an officer who shakes his hand for a long time, looking with

rapture into his face. G. is glad, he too shakes hands warmly. At last the officer: "And how is your orchestra? Aren't you the conductor?"

IT seemed to him that he was highly respected and valued everywhere, anywhere, even in railway-buffets, and so he always ate with a smile on his face.

THE birds sing, and already it begins to seem to him that they do not sing, but whine.

N., father of a family, listens to his son reading aloud J. J. Rousseau to the family, and thinks: "Well, at any rate, J. J. Rousseau had no gold medal on his breast, but I have one."

N. has a spree with his step-son, an undergraduate, and they go to a brothel. In the morning the undergraduate is going away, his leave is up; N. sees him off. The undergraduate reads him a sermon on their bad behaviour; they quarrel. N.: "As your father, I curse you."—"And I curse you."

A DOCTOR is called in, but a nurse is sent for.

N. N. V. never agrees with anyone. "Yes, the ceiling is white, that can be admitted; but white, as far as is known, consists of the seven colours of the spectrum, and it is quite possible that in this case one of the colours is darker or brighter than is necessary for the production of pure white; I had rather think a bit before saying that the ceiling is white."

HE holds himself exactly as though he were an icon.

WHATEVER happens, he says: "It is the priests."

N. dreams that he is returning from abroad, and that at Verzhbolov, in spite of his protests, they make him pay duty on his wife.

WHEN that radical, having dined with his coat off, walked into his bed-room and I saw the braces on his back, it became clear to me that that radical is a bourgeois, a helpless bourgeois.

SOME one saw Z., an unbeliever and blasphemer, secretly praying in front of the icon in the cathedral, and they all teased him.

COUNTESS NADIN's daughter gradually turns into a house-keeper; she is very timid, and can only say "No—," "Yes-s," and her hands always tremble. Somehow or other a Zemstvo official wished to marry her; he is a widower and she marries him: with him too it was "Yes-s," "No-o"; she was very much afraid of her husband and did not love him; one day he happened to give a loud cough, it gave her a fright, and she died.

FOR a play: If only you would say something funny. But for twenty years we have lived together and you have always talked of serious things; I hate serious things.

A COOK, with a cigarette in her mouth, lies: "I studied at a high school. . . . I knows what for the earth is round."

"SOCIETY for finding and raising anchors of steamers and barges" and the Society's agent at all functions without fail makes a speech, à la N., and without fail promises . . .

A SHY young man came on a visit for the night: suddenly a deaf old woman came into his room, carrying a cupping-glass, and bled him; he thought that this must be the usual thing and so did not protest; in the morning it turned out that the old woman had made a mistake.

THE more stupid the peasant, the better does the horse understand him.

(*Chekhov's Notebook, which serial publication ends in this issue, will shortly be published in book form by B. W. Huebsch, Inc.*)



## THE MYTH OF A GUILTY NATION: II.

THE introductory paper published in the *Freeman* two weeks ago spoke of the idea popularly held by Americans, that the war was launched by the German Government, at a moment of its own choosing, upon an unprepared and unsuspecting Europe. The fact is that Europe was as thoroughly organized for war as it could possibly be. The point to which that organization was carried by England, France and Russia, as compared with Germany and Austria, may to some extent be indicated by statistics. In 1913, Russia carried a military establishment (on a peace footing) of 1,284,000 men; France, by an addition of 183,000 men, proposed to raise her peace-establishment to a total of 741,572. Germany, by an addition of 174,373 men, proposed to raise her total to 821,964; and Austria, by additions of 58,505 already made, brought her total up to 473,643. These are the figures of the British War Office, as furnished to the House of Commons in 1913.

Here is a set of figures that is even more interesting and significant. From 1909 to 1914, the amount spent on new naval construction by England, France and Russia, as compared with Germany, was as follows:

	ENGLAND	FRANCE	RUSSIA	GERMANY
1909	£11,076,551	£ 4,517,766	£ 1,758,487	£10,177,062
1910	£14,755,289	£ 4,977,682	£ 1,424,013	£11,392,856
1911	£15,148,171	£ 5,876,659	£ 3,216,396	£11,710,859
1912	£16,132,558	£ 7,114,876	£ 6,897,580	£11,491,187
1913	£16,883,875	£ 8,893,064	£12,082,516	£11,010,883
1914	£18,676,080	£11,772,862	£13,098,613	£10,316,264

These figures can not be too carefully studied by those who have been led to think that Germany pounced upon a defenceless and unsuspecting Europe like a cat upon a mouse. Considering also the period preceding 1909, England's superiority in battleships alone was 112 per cent in 1901, and her superiority rose to nearly 200 per cent in 1904; in which year England spent £42,431,000 on her navy, and Germany £11,659,000. Taking the figures from 1900, in which year England spent £32,055,000 on her navy, and Germany spent £7,472,000, down to 1914, it is absolutely impossible to find any evidence that Germany did anything to enforce upon the other nations of Europe an unwilling competition in naval armament.

But the German army! According to all accounts of German militarism which were suffered to reach these shores, it is here that we shall find evidence of what Mr. Lloyd George, on 4 August, 1917, called "the most dangerous conspiracy ever plotted against the liberty of nations; carefully, skilfully, insidiously, clandestinely planned in every detail, with ruthless, cynical determination." Well, if one chooses to hold the current view of German militarism, it must be admitted that Germany had at her disposal some miraculous means of getting something for nothing, getting a great deal for nothing, in fact, for on any other supposition, the figures are far from supporting that view. In 1914 (pre-war figures), Germany and Austria together carried an army-expenditure of £92 million; England, France and Russia together carried one of £142 million. England "had no army," it was said; all her military strength lay in her navy. If that were true, then it must be said that she had as miraculous a faculty as Germany's; only, whereas Germany's was a faculty for getting more than her money's worth, England's was for getting less than her money's worth. England's army-expenditure for 1914 (pre-war figures) was £28 million; £4 million more than Austria's. Nor was this a sudden emergency-outlay. Going back as far as 1905, we find that she laid out in that year precisely the same amount, £28 million. In that year, Germany and Aus-

tria together spent £48 million on their armies; England, France and Russia together spent £94 million on theirs. If these sums of money were expended by England, France and Russia, for military purposes, and nothing came of it but an unprepared and unsuspecting Europe in 1914, it seems clear that the taxpayers of those countries were swindled on an inconceivably large scale.

At this point, some questions may be raised. Why, in the decade preceding 1914, did England, France and Russia arm themselves at the rate indicated by the foregoing figures? Why did they accelerate their naval development progressively from about £17 million in 1909 to about £43 million in 1914? Why did Russia alone raise her military peace-establishment to an army of 1,700,000, more than double the size of Germany's army? Against whom were these preparations directed, and understood to be directed? Certainly not against one another. France and Russia had been bound by a military convention ever since 17 August, 1892; England and France had been bound since January, 1906, by a similar pact, and this was subsequently extended to include Belgium. These agreements will be considered in detail hereafter; they are now mentioned merely to show that the military activity in these countries was not independent in purpose. France, England, Russia and Belgium were not uneasy about one another and not arming against one another; nor is there any evidence that anyone thought that they were. It was against the Central Empires only that these preparations were addressed. The English-French-Russian military combination may be alleged to have been effected for purely defensive purposes; but anyone who scans the table of relative expenditure between this and the German-Austrian combination is bound to have his doubts, even though there were no other evidence available. At all events, if the combination were popularly considered to exist for purely defensive purposes, several of the diplomats of the time did not so regard it. The Belgian Ambassador at Berlin reported, 18 April, 1907, with some bitterness—as well he might, inasmuch as he could plainly see what was coming and how the interests of his country would be affected:

Like the treaty of alliance with Japan, the *entente cordiale* with France and the negotiations pending with Russia, the King of England's visit to the King of Spain is one of the moves in the campaign to isolate Germany, that is being personally directed with as much perseverance as success by His Majesty, King Edward VII.

But this is by the way. For the present it is enough to say that as long as this combination existed, and had carried on military development to the extent indicated by these expenditures, one can hardly take stock in the theory of an unprepared Europe and a set of helpless, defenceless and peace-ensuing Governments. Nor, as one examines the political and diplomatic history of the war, can one take stock in the theory that any of the four Governments, England, France, Russia and Belgium, was taken by surprise.

The British Government is the one most often represented as taken utterly by surprise by the German onslaught on Belgium. Let us see. The Austrian Archduke was assassinated 28 June, by three men who, according to wide report in Europe and absolute certainty in America, were secret agents of the German Government acting under German instruction. The findings of the court of inquiry showed that they were Serbs, members of a pan-Slav organization; that the assassination was plotted in Belgrade, and the arms with which it was committed were obtained there. Serbia denied



all connexion with the assassins (the policy of Serbia being then controlled by the Russian Foreign Office), and then the Russian Government stepped forward to prevent the humiliation of Serbia by Austria.<sup>1</sup> It is clear from the published diplomatic documents that the British Foreign Office knew everything that took place between the assassination and the burial of the Archduke; all the facts, that is, connected with the murder. The first dispatch in the British White Paper is dated 20 July, and it is addressed to the British Ambassador at Berlin. One wonders why not to the Ambassador at Vienna; also one wonders why the diplomats apparently found nothing to write about for nearly three weeks between the Archduke's funeral and 20 July. It is a strange silence. Sir Edward Grey, however, made a statement in the House of Commons 27 July, in which he gave the impression that he got his first information about the course of the quarrel between Austria and Serbia no earlier than 24 July, three days before. The Ambassador at Vienna, Sir M. de Bunsen, had, notwithstanding, telegraphed him that the Austrian Premier had given him no hint of "the impending storm" and that it was from a private source "that I received, 15 July, the forecast of what was about to happen, concerning which *I telegraphed to you the following day.*" It is exceedingly odd that Sir Maurice de Bunsen's telegram on this important subject should have been suppressed, unless it carried evidence that Sir E. Grey was thoroughly well posted by 16 July on what was taking place in Vienna.

On 28 July, the House of Commons was informed that Austria had declared war on Serbia. Two days later, 30 July, Sir E. Grey added the item of information that Russia had ordered a partial mobilization "which has not hitherto led to any corresponding steps by other Powers, so far as our information goes." Sir E. Grey did not add, however, that he knew quite well what "corresponding steps" other Powers were likely to take. He knew the terms of the Russian-French military convention, under which a mobilization by Russia was to be held equivalent to a declaration of war; he also knew the terms of the English-French agreement which he himself had authorized—although up to the eve of the war he denied, in reply to questions in the House of Commons, that any such agreement existed, and acknowledged it only on 3 August, 1914. He had promised Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, in 1912, that in the event of Germany's coming to Austria's aid, Russia could rely on Great Britain to "stake everything in order to inflict the most serious blow to German power." To say that Sir E. Grey, and *a fortiori* Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister; Lord Haldane, the Minister for War, whose own book has been a most tremendous let-down to the fictions of the propagandists; Mr. Winston Churchill, head of the Admiralty, who at Dundee, 5 June, 1915, declared that he had been sent to the Admiralty in 1911 with the express duty laid upon him by the Prime Minister to put the fleet in a state of instant and constant readiness for war; to say that these men were taken by surprise and unprepared, is mere levity.

Austria was supposed to be, and still is by some believed to have been, Germany's vassal State, and by menacing Serbia to have been doing Germany's dirty work. No evidence of this has been adduced; and the trouble with this idea of Austria's status is that it breaks

<sup>1</sup> Six months after the armistice, the bodies of the three assassins were dug up, according to a Central News dispatch from Prague, "with great solemnity, in the presence of thousands of the inhabitants. The remains of these Serbian officers are to be sent to their native country." This is a naive statement. It remains to be accounted for why these "German agents" should be thus treated by the Serbs!

down before the report of Sir M. de Bunsen, 1 September, 1914, that Austria finally yielded and agreed to accept all the proposals of the Powers for mediation between herself and Serbia. She made every concession. Russian mobilization, however, had begun on 25 July and become general four days later; and it was not stopped. Germany then gave notice that she would mobilize her army if Russian measures were not stopped in twelve hours; and also, knowing the terms of the Russian-French convention of 1892, she also served notice on France, giving her eighteen hours to declare her position. Russia made no reply; France answered that she would do what she thought best in her own interest; and almost at the moment, on 1 August, when Germany ordered a general mobilization, Russian troops were over her border, the British fleet had been mobilized for a week in the North Sea, and British merchant ships were lying at Kronstadt, empty, to convey Russian troops from that port to the Pomeranian coast, in pursuance of the plan indicated by Lord Fisher in his autobiography, recently published.

These matters are well summed up by Lord Loreburn, as follows:

Serbia gave offence to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, cause of just offence, as our Ambassador frankly admits in his published dispatches. We [England] had no concern in that quarrel, as Sir Edward Grey says in terms. But Russia, the protectress of Serbia, came forward to prevent her being utterly humiliated by Austria. We were not concerned in that quarrel either, as Sir Edward also says. And then Russia called upon France under their treaty to help in the fight. France was not concerned in that quarrel any more than ourselves, as Sir Edward informs us. But France was bound by a Russian treaty, of which he did not know the terms, and then France called on us for help. We were tied by the relations which our Foreign Office had created, without apparently realizing that they had created them.

Lord Loreburn is generous to Sir E. Grey, probably more generous than he should be; but that is no matter. The thing to be remarked is that Lord Loreburn's summing-up comes to something wholly different from Mr. Lloyd George's "most dangerous conspiracy ever plotted against the liberty of nations." It comes to something wholly different from the notion implanted in Americans, of Germany pouncing upon a peaceful, unprepared and unsuspecting Europe. The German nation, we may be sure, is keenly aware of this difference; and therefore, any peace which, like the peace of Versailles, is bottomed on the *chose jugée* of laying the sole responsibility for the war at the door of the German nation, or even at the door of the German Government, simply will not last.

HISTORICUS.

## ON THE CENTENARY OF DANTE.

### I

IN the superstition and formality of centenary celebrations, there is something that is profoundly repellent to the critical mind. The practical hero may need the recurrence of times, the fixity of places—these survivals of the worship of the saints—as a help for the memory of his deeds in the hearts of posterity: his commemoration must be, can not be anything else than a conscious effort of historical recollection. But poets are co-eternal with all generations; their work is a perpetual revelation. They may have seasons of more intense life after death, but these seasons do not necessarily coincide with a series of secular intervals.

We shall studiously avoid the pomp and ceremony of vanity filling itself with an empty name—studiously, but not disdainfully, since we still believe that to the



charities of poetry, though few are of the elect, there is not one human being, however much he may be incapacitated by wealth or misery, by erudition or ignorance, by office, by worldly success, by love of himself, who was not originally called by the mere fact of his birth. While we sit at this true *mensa pauperum*, partaking of the bread and water, how can we scorn the delicate ladies and the supercilious gentlemen, who are convinced that their own fare is infinitely more exquisite? But that it should ever have been possible—that it should be possible still—for men and women to go through their lives without having been told that this bread and this water is theirs for the asking—this is our sin, too, and will be as a cloud overshadowing the humble table spread, as we had thought, in full sight of our Brother Sun.

This is the way in which these practical, and formal, and superstitious celebrations do in the end justify themselves: by telling one man or one woman that there is somewhere a hidden treasure, a measureless joy, a thought and a harmony, by which his or her life may suddenly stand revealed to itself in a new light, in a different sphere.

## II

For centuries, ashamed of our joy, we have gone to every field of human activity begging for a moral or logical justification of poetry. Dante has been in turn the theologian, the moral philosopher, the political scientist, the prophet of nationalism, the denouncer of the vices of the clergy; and his poetry has been regarded as a mere scintillation of his wisdom. Dante himself, by pointing to the allegorical key of his poem, has shown the way to his commentators, unaware, as a thinker if not as an artist, of his own power of eternizing a meaning in an image—an intention in a word.

Yet before we could begin to see Dante's poem as what it substantially is: poetry, Dante's meanings had to be elaborated and digested, and not in their logical implications only, but also as they realized and resolved themselves in the slow process of Italian history. Vice, the last philosopher of the Italian Renaissance, and the greatest of all, coming after the dissolution of the theology and the moral systems of the Middle Ages, discovered in Dante the new Homer; and Francesco de Sanctis, though practically involved in the fulfilment of Dante's prophecy, sees in the "Divina Commedia" "the Middle Ages realized as Art," and so clears the way for the new criticism. Dante's poetry is gradually emerging into the light of our consciousness, as the sharp contour of a statue appears when the sculptor breaks away with his chisel the mould that conceals the bronze from our eyes: the mould that in its shape is but a rough, awkward presentment of the statue, and yet gives it its form.

## III

Certain worthy critics have investigated the political ideas and feelings of which Beethoven's "Eroica" is the expression. In a similar relation stands the world of Dante to the poetry of Dante: in other words Dante's only true world is one which has a certain colour and a certain tone in Dante's poetry. Nothing that is gathered from outside can ever be relevant to the understanding of the "Commedia," unless the critic, very humbly, very quietly, tries to listen to the voices that actually came to the ear of the poet, and seeks to follow their message within the labyrinth of Dante's poetical imagination. Of the critical literature on Dante, one hundredth part, perhaps, is of this kind; the rest is concerned with other things.

I believe that we are only beginning to find our way

into that labyrinth: a poetical consciousness is still a mystery of which but few seals have been broken. Croce's "Poesia di Dante," which will probably remain as the only lasting monument of this centenary, is a magnificent methodology of Dantesque—and general—literary criticism. We can follow him in practically all that is destructive in his research; we can follow him in his attempt to define the unity and character of Dante's poetry in that peculiar pathos and ethos which is the spirit of Dante; but we can not help feeling ill at ease when we find the old conflict between science and poetry resolved into a distinction between the structure and the poetry of the "Commedia." To Croce's comparison of the three parts of the poem with "three books in which a poet had gathered his lyrical poems, grouping them according to certain similarities," we prefer the saying of Leopardi, who saw but "one long lyrical poem, where the poet and his emotions are constantly present." One is afraid of this aesthetic atomism, which is a reaction to old rhetorics, and though justifiable as such, can only be fully justified when it becomes the starting-point for a deeper vision.

The structure of the "Commedia," if one looks not at the stones but at the whole edifice, is as much of the imagination as any single episode; it is poetry, even if one can not point to a single word in the poem in which that poetry is fully realized. But every word, the poetry of each individual episode, has a quality which would be different if Dante had not lived for years in the austere shadow, and in the fervid light of his imaginative vision, as if it were a living reality. In the poem, neither Francesca nor Ugolino could be anywhere else but where they are; not because of the moral order or because of the physical appearance of the other world, but because of their relationship with what comes before and with what comes after, which is of a purely poetical nature, though it may be abstractly identified at one time with the moral order, at another with the topography of the "Inferno." In fact, the secret of poetical structure is similar to the law that governs a symphony or a sonata; and if we should ever discover it, we should have found also the true connexion between the spirit of Dante and the poetry of Dante—between the soul and the body of his poem.

All this is as much as to say that where we differ in one particular point of criticism we implicitly question the foundations of a theory of knowledge. Though we possess no better instrument, we know what it is we want. "Why not Aristotle?" the very old and the very young, equally amazed at something they have recently discovered, kindly ask of us in our difficulty. "Why not the caverns in the Pyrenees, dear friends?"

## IV

After our conquest of Dante as a poet, when poetry itself shall become as clear and transparent as the morning air in the mountains—something that we perceive only as an element of the light of the sun, of the colours of trees and grass and rock—the personality of Dante will stand before us, as complete and human as that of any man who ever walked through this *selva selvaggia* of life. His poetical imagination, which is our only means of approach, will no longer be the object of our vision, but merely its visibility.

A centenary—let us say another good word for the celebrators—a centenary makes us think not in terms of months and years, which is all we seem to be able to do in this dawn of a century—but in terms of centuries:



it may give us perspective, the sense of space, the patience of history; and poetry suddenly abolishes the otherwise unconquerable distance, gives us the presence, the immediacy, the contemporaneity of history.

A human personality: and what fuller definition for it can we have, than the one Dante himself gave of himself: the poet of righteousness? Not an abstract, remote virtue, but a passionate, intelligent, energetic participation in natural, human and divine life, a soul that descends to the centre of this visible universe, and ascends beyond the heavenly spheres to the ineffable contemplation of that which has neither time nor space. An experience of the human vices and valour of the Italy of his day, and of all the past that was then present, in the aspect it presented in his times. A crystalline and massive moral conscience, which does not conceal any weakness or violence either in himself or in others. A clear, precise, active intellect, not resting idly and complacently in the vagueness and twilight of the mystic grove, but postulating as the limit or complement of purely intellectual speculation, as the foundation of his intellectual faith, another world of real existences, as clear and precise as our own earthly abode.

Critical understanding—that is, to gain a knowledge of a poet—is an act of humility. We may project our own spirit into that time and place and spiritual climate; into a Florence which was a city of Christianity, standing on a Ptolemaic and Catholic earth. Having re-created in that miraculous mirror all our relations with a world which was our human and natural world, but differently determined, we shall gain that freedom, that power, that beauty, which belongs to his poetry. We shall live an infinitely complex human experience, not through our unaided forces, but by the grace of this blessed Beatrice.

#### V

Is Dante mediæval? We create an abstract conception of what we call the Middle Ages in our mind, and to make it intelligible and coherent, we exclude from it all that has the warm breath and delicate complexity of life. We then thrust this awkward thing between ancient and modern times, and make an absurd miracle of the Renaissance, and sacrifice to our classificatory mania any chance that we may have of understanding the true processes of our own growth. To that question: Is Dante mediæval?—there is no answer, except for the librarian (and for him, legitimately) and for the pedant.

The thirteenth century in Italy is the critical century of our own history: with the great scholastic systems and the Franciscan revolution; with the Holy Roman Empire in its last gasps; with the guild-governments of the cities; with a God that for the intellect is still in his heaven, but for the heart already lives in nature and in the soul of man. Dante is the poet of that crisis. But in Dante the opposition is not only between intellect and art, between his science and his poetry; it is carried right into the structure of his science and the soul of his poetry. A divine truth apprehended by the method of scholastic theology, has for its symbol a mortal woman, lifted to that glory through a new idea of love which is fundamentally Franciscan. In his political theory, Dante asks for a universal government of mankind, as a means for attaining perpetual peace: the quietude and tranquillity of peace which is freedom for mankind to attend to its own work, *quod fere divinum est*—almost divine.

We have erased the *fere*, only to discover, with much bitterness and little hope, that we have been going too fast.

RAFFAELLO PICCOLI.

#### RAW MATERIALS.

THE local logger with whom I rode up from Manchester this noon recounted with good-humoured despair his losses during the war. He had made contracts a few months before the American participation that would have made a fair profit, but the sudden advance in the cost of labour was not compensated by the giddy rise in the price of hard woods that occurred in 1917. It was the wholesaler who reaped that benefit. When the logger's contracts expired toward the end of the war and were renewed at war-prices he seemed to be in a strong position. The labour-cost of logging began to decline before he had fulfilled half his contract, and, as the price of lumber went down, it seemed that the joke might be on the jobber this time. But it was not. The distributor simply broke the contract and left the local lumberman high and dry.

"Why didn't you sue?" I inquired ingenuously.

"Nothing in that! They could afford to squeal. They'd made so much money during the war they could hire high-priced counsel and make a bum out of me. . . . Anyway, the dealer in raw materials, unless he has a monopoly, always stands to lose, don't he?"

He chuckled over the rhetorical question as he set me down at the post office, then headed up the steep road to his small logging-camp on the mountainside.

From where I am seated on a ledge across the valley, I can see the smoky, mauve burgeoning of the hard wood which this man is cutting. It stretches down from the ragged sky-line of the Teconic Mountains to high meadows where sheep and young lambs are cropping vivid green between clumps of cinquefoil and the grey boulders and outcroppings of the range. Below the meadows are steep fields of young timothy, and below these, Vermont ploughmen are turning gentler slopes from green to brown as their teams crawl along the broad foundations of the hills. In the pastures along the white water of the little stream that waters the valley are herds of dairy cattle. Near by are fields dotted with the growing stock and colony-houses of poultrymen. Here and there in the landscape are tender green squares of apple-orchard, blooming thinly because of a late frost. That completes the producers' share of the scene, I believe, for the more prosperous areas of the valley, about the little town with its granite church, are enjoyed by distributors or their allies and entertainers during the short summer. Here are remodelled "colonial" farmhouses, Tudor mansions, Italian villas and more or less elaborate landscape-gardening.

What a picture of industrial civilization this community presents as it spreads from the foot of this ledge to the mountain crests across the way! I know the life of that poultryman, with its interminable drudgery from daylight to dark, and until long after dark in the growing and broiler seasons. Through the late winter and early spring the incubators broke his night's rest after a hard day's labour. To-night he will be prowling about among coal-stove brooders, what time New York's theatre-crowd throngs Times Square. Soon he will be marketing his broilers and will inhabit the killing and picking shed ten to fourteen hours a day. As often as he sleeps he will dream of mortgages and notes. It will be the same with the dairyman and the orchardist—hard work, no play to speak of, and small profit or none. Each one is wondering if he may not be the next deserter in this struggle with nature for food, clothing and shelter in which the producer is first line of defence. It may be a "good old war" for the men who sell the goods in packages—in quarts, crates and dozens, bales, bags and board-feet, but the logger, the dairyman, the poultryman, apple-grower and sheep-raiser are "fed-up" and ready to capitulate.

As I write these lines I can see beyond a forty-acre patch of timothy the greens and fairways of a nine-hole golf-course, where the "summer people" will be at play in a few weeks. As they knock the ball about the links and remark that business is "getting deader and deader,"



the producers will be swinking in adjacent hayfields with the nightmare of foreclosure in the back of their minds. For whether business is dead or alive these farmers must work in a kind of grim fury to keep their roots in the ancestral acres. The wall above the writing-desk in the post office is papered with receivership notices. Every year, I fancy, a half-dozen farmsteads go over from productive to unproductive categories. The weathered, decaying home that was new in Ethan Allen's day is repainted. Rag rugs are strewn about, two bathrooms installed and several wagonloads of "colonial" furniture arrive to replace the battered possessions of the defeated producer . . . for he stands to lose every time in this prodigal, asymmetrical industrial era.

But the whole crazy economic structure, of which the ground-plan appears so plainly in this valley, is becoming so wildly aslant that it is not untimely, perhaps, to begin to dream of the new edifice that may be erected—when the present one collapses—on a broader and firmer foundation of land-holding producers. Already, in Europe the quondam distributor is in the peasant's dooryard, begging for his litre of milk, his half-dozen of eggs. In certain districts of South Russia, where economic catastrophe is complete, peasants are adorning their cottages with works of art, bartered for farm-produce. There, according to a Ukrainian friend of mine, each farming-community is organized against the rest of the world after the fashion of a mediæval commune, with a local military force to defend itself against pillage by brigands, or exploitation by those who would perpetuate industrialism in a less barbarous form. In many parts of Europe, where disorganization has not gone so far as in Little Russia, the farmer, of course, is a ruthless profiteer, and whether or not he is growing fat in the economic catch-as-catch-can, his security is the happiest, as he lives at the source of food, and shelter.

In fact, if I were a Vermont farmer with eighty acres and a wood-lot, I would hold to the land with finger-nails and teeth and wait for the economic world to turn upside down here as it has abroad, and when I should find myself on top I would be human enough to take a moderate recompense for having been bled white of profit in a season or two of scandalous profiteering. Then I would cultivate an understanding with my fellow-producers, an *entente cordiale* which somehow would preclude the risk of ever again being at the mercy of those who sit in towers of concrete and steel, manipulating manipulators who distribute the produce of producers. This would begin with local co-operative buying and selling agencies and, if it could end there, that would be so much the better.

EDWARD TOWNSEND BOOTH.

## LETTERS FROM ABROAD.

### PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS.

SIRS: Events have not been long in confirming my opinion (see the *Freeman* of 18 May) that French militarism would be powerless without the support of British imperialism. When M. Briand went to Lympne in April, his conduct was mapped out for him by the militarists with M. Raymond Poincaré at their head. He was to inform Mr. Lloyd George that France would stand no more nonsense, that Germany was to be given no more time, and that on May the first, French troops were going to march into the Ruhr Valley, even if they went alone and whether England and Italy agreed or not. The British Foreign Office had other views. It had determined that Germany should be given more time and that there should be no occupation of the Ruhr. Germany was given more time and there has been no occupation of the Ruhr.

Thus betrayed, the French militarists vowed vengeance on M. Briand, who was to be incontinently driven from power for his weakness in yielding to *perfidie Albion*. M. Raymond Poincaré had formed his Cabinet: it included M. Barthou, the present Minister of War, who

as M. Clemenceau once said, has principles—"successive principles." The attack was skilfully prepared and carried out according to plan. One after another, ardent patriots ascended the tribune of the Chamber to declare, amid the frantic applause of three-fourths of the deputies, that France would act alone and Mr. Lloyd George could go to the devil. But when, in M. Briand's words, "*la lourde heure de responsabilité*" succeeded to "*les bonnes heures de critique*," the attacking forces melted away like snow and the remnant retreated in disorder. M. Briand, who, with all his suavity, can be brutally frank when he likes, just put the Chamber face to face with hard facts. His policy, he admitted, was not ideal, but the alternative was the isolation of France. He was not prepared to take the responsibility of that alternative: was the Chamber? It was not. Not a hundred deputies ventured to take it, for of the 157 in the minority on 26 May, sixty were Socialists and Communists who voted against the Government because they disapprove of its whole policy in regard to Germany and are in favour of a friendly understanding between the two countries.

In the Senate the defeat of the die-hards was still more complete, for the only vote gave the Government a majority of 269 to eight. M. Briand was even more liberal with disagreeable truths in the Senate than he had been in the Chamber. Those who told the country that France had only to occupy the Ruhr to obtain payment of the indemnity were, he said, deceiving it. If they occupied the Ruhr, what then? They would have to go further. That would mean a general mobilization. Would the French people stand it? Already M. Briand had made a significant remark in the Chamber. He said, in reply to a question, that if Germany failed in any of the engagements involved in her acceptance of the last ultimatum, France would have automatically the right to occupy the Ruhr without consulting her allies. But what, said a deputy, if the Allies refused to join in the operation? "They would be within their rights," was the dry reply.

Not since 1914 has a French Prime Minister talked such good sense. I have no respect for M. Briand's character—he is as shifty as Mr. Lloyd George—but I have a great respect for his intelligence, which is superior to that of his Welsh colleague—or opponent. The British Premier is a man of makeshifts, who never has a policy for more than twenty-four hours ahead. M. Briand has some of the qualities of a statesman, and he has far more knowledge than Mr. Lloyd George, whose ignorance is universal. But behind the Welshman is the skilful diplomacy of the British Foreign Office, based on a keen sense of realities. M. Briand can get no help from the Quai d'Orsay, where there is no sense of realities at all. One has only to read M. Jean Herbet's semi-official articles in the *Temps* during the period of the ultimatum to discern that the Quai d'Orsay is as anxious to occupy the Ruhr as it was to go to war with Germany in 1911. M. Briand's path is strewn with obstacles and he may yet be tripped up, but for the moment he has saved France from a crowning folly. He has not been hoodwinked by Mr. Lloyd George as MM. Clemenceau and Millerand were. He has simply come up against the hard fact that England can get on well enough without France, but France can not get on without England so long as she continues her present crazy policy, for her only friends left in Europe are Poland and Belgium—and the latter is shaky. France has only the alternative of a complete change of policy, which would restore to her the friendships that she has lost, or continued subjection to Great Britain, which means expensive shadows for French militarism and the substance for British imperialism. She can recover her independence only by abandoning dreams of European hegemony—which Britain will never allow her to realize—and coming to terms with Germany on a reasonable basis, beginning with the admirably practical scheme for the restoration of the devastated region that has been formulated by the French and German Trade Unionists with the assistance of the Vienna Union of Socialist Societies.



It will, I fear, be long before these realities are generally recognized in France. The *Temps* of 31 May published an editorial in which M. Briand's policy is accepted as being after all preferable to dreams of visionary billions. That is promising, but the article ends with the assertions that the victory in the war was the victory of France, that France has "saved Europe with herself" and that she has the right to expect from Europe assistance rather than jealousy or fear. How does the *Temps* suppose that such claims will be received in other countries, where everybody knows that, but for the support of England and the United States, France would have been beaten again in 1914 as thoroughly as in 1871? Besides, looking at the condition of the Europe that has been "saved," one may well ask how it could be worse. France may be "radiant with her victory," as the *Temps* leader-writer says, but the French Minister of Finance does not know where to find the money for current expenses from one week to another and State payments are hopelessly in arrear.

Nobody is jealous of France, nor is there any apparent reason for jealousy, but it is true enough that the greater part of Europe is afraid of her, for the same reason that one would be afraid of a lady with a lighted match running about in a powder-store. She would be unpopular at the moment, whatever her attractions might be. The French seem unable to understand their present unpopularity, yet it is intelligible enough. Take, for example, the case of England. The British Foreign Office did not go to war in 1914 for the *beaux yeux* of "*la belle France*," but primarily to maintain the balance of power in Europe, which was endangered by the military and naval growth of Germany, and, secondarily, to prevent a hostile domination of the coast of Flanders. At present this balance of power on the Continent is endangered by the complete collapse of Germany, and the military power of France, and for that reason the British Foreign Office instinctively inclines to the weaker side. Anybody might have known that such a state of things would come to pass.

On the other hand, France was genuinely and immensely popular with the mass of the English people both before and during the war. Now she is intensely unpopular in England, particularly among those who have always been her friends—the radicals. The reason is simple. The France that influenced the world was the France of the eighteenth century, the France of Voltaire and Montesquieu, the country of the Revolution. Everywhere, as in England, the friends and admirers of France were on the Left. They are all estranged from a France that has become the centre of European reaction. Again anybody might have foreseen that. Friendship between the militarists and imperialists of different countries can never be permanent. They may be friends for a time against a common enemy, but, when the enemy has been beaten, they will quarrel over the spoils. That is what is now happening.

Had France remained true to her revolutionary traditions, she could have counted on a change of Government in England to restore cordial co-operation between the two countries. As it is, such a change would mean the end of the Entente. If the British Labour party came into power, it would abandon the imperialist aims that oblige the present rulers of England to make some concessions to French militarism, would renounce the British share of the indemnity, withdraw the British troops from German occupied territory, and leave France to her own devices. For in no section of the British people is France so intensely disliked as in the working class. The British workman is not "radiant with victory"; he has had more than enough of it and of everything to do with war; and he is bitterly hostile to every influence that makes for a continuance of European unrest.

Mr. Lloyd George is quite justified in saying that, in his attitude on the Silesian question, he has the whole country behind him, although not all for the same reasons. British capitalism has no intention of allowing the

control of the Upper Silesian mines to pass into French hands and the Polish Government would have been wiser not to make arrangements of that kind before it was in a position to deliver the goods. The British Foreign Office has no intention of allowing France to use Poland as an instrument for establishing a French hegemony on the Continent. It is known that there is a secret treaty between France and Poland, and, although its terms are not known, its effects are becoming evident. In all probability the Polish rising—or rather invasion—had been timed to take place simultaneously with the French entry into the Ruhr. When the latter was postponed, General Korfanty started alone. In any case the complicity of the French authorities in Upper Silesia in the Polish *coup* is clearly established by the evidence in the hands of the British Government. Mr. Lloyd George's remarks about "loyalty" were not intended exclusively for Warsaw. His speech and the still more outspoken statement, with its significant remark about new alliances, were meant for France even more than for Poland. I suspect that the British Premier has been waiting for a good opportunity to give a public warning to France, and the action of Poland in Upper Silesia enabled it to be given indirectly—quite in the Lloyd George manner.

Upper Silesia is only the beginning of Polish ambitions which extend to nothing less than the restoration of the old Polish kingdom under the disguise of a federation of the Russian border States under Polish domination. At the recent conference in Brussels between Poland and Lithuania under M. Hymans's presidency, the Polish delegates attempted to absorb Lithuania by forcing her into such a federation. This is now the policy of the Quai d'Orsay; its previous policy of absorbing the border States into a restored Russian Empire having finally failed with the collapse of General Wrangel. It is hardly likely that the British Government will tolerate any such policy. I am, etc.,

Geneva, Switzerland.

ROBERT DELL.

## MISCELLANY.

At this season of the year one is prepared to put up with a great deal of pseudo-patriotic ostentation; but one feels no great pride at hearing that a group of our countrymen have shattered the harmless conventions of Buckingham Palace and thereby affronted the dignity of a good many people, Americans as well as English. The news-dispatches have it that these business builders, officers of the Rotary Club, went down the Mall the other day, "in very informal tourist clothes," to call upon the King. Each of the visitors wore, besides his store-suit, a large badge emblazoned with his own name and that of his home town. This made things very easy for the King, and a delightful time was had by all. Indeed, one of the Americans got on so well with His Majesty that he could not help springing his little vulgarity from the hinterland of Yankeedom, about "Buck-and-Wing Palace." This incident made a deep impression on the reporter's mind; and indeed the whole affair seemed to him to be characterized by "a Jeffersonian simplicity."

In this last phrase there is an implication that is almost too much for one's good temper. Thomas Jefferson was a citizen of the intellectual world of his time, and it is not recorded that his love of American political independence exhibited itself in any sort of boorishness or barbarism. Jefferson and Franklin and Tom Paine wore clothes of one sort or another, and went about the world a good deal, but the contrast between their appearance and deportment and that of the men with whom they came in contact was a matter of little consequence to them, or to anybody else. If they dressed like democrats, they did so accidentally or incidentally; what one remembers is that they *were* democrats and much more than that. One may be tolerably sure that neither they nor the other good Americans of their time took pride in the purely negative quality of uncouthness. One likes to believe that in those days men realized that real simplicity consists in an in-



difference to blue jeans and gold lace alike, which removes both from the centre of attention.

If a group of Russian peasants and American plantation-Negroes had gone with our Rotarians to see the King, they might have been conscious of their own outlandishness, but not proud of it. If Tolstoy had been there, bare-footed and smocked, he would no doubt have been quite oblivious to the strangeness of his attire. Uncouthness becomes a matter of real importance only when it is regarded by its possessors as a substitute for something substantial and unattainable. The same thing, too, may be said of over-refinement. The cablegram that brings news of the Rotarian Idyll of the King tells us also that "the King was in a gray frock-coat and the Queen in a cream-coloured gown, most conservatively cut." One can only say that apparently if the royalties and their visitors had sent their clothes to call upon one another, the meeting would have had no less profound a significance.

"A MAN thinks to show himself my equal," said Goethe, "by being *grob* [i. e. boorish and vulgar.] He does not show himself my equal; he shows himself *grob*." Neither polish nor roughness can make anything but affectation out of an affectation. However, the English affectation is somewhat less dangerous than the American, for the persons who can afford to disport themselves as decorative marionettes are always fewer than those who can perpetually play Peck's Bad Boy instead of growing to cultural manhood. For this reason, if for no other, the "by heck!" spirit has doubtless worked more injury to America than the continuous dress-parade of royalty ever has to England.

YET in spite of this, I am afraid we are becoming the most "genteel" race on earth, the most incurably "refined." Europeans sometimes talk of "American materialism" as something for Europe to dread. They are, I am convinced, mistaken. Our alleged "materialism" is sheer national exuberance—a thing to sparkle and fizz, like our climate. But if one is to judge by the professional guide-books that are published for our enlightenment, our feeling for "culture" is not a thing of gusto, enthusiasm and sincerity; it is something that is timid, polite, barren of general ideas, a thing of prunes and prisms. Take such a popular handbook, for instance, as Mrs. Lorinda M. Bryant's "American Pictures and their Painters." I doubt whether such a book could be published in Paris or Berlin, or even in London. In all the wide world there is just one market for it—America—and just one type of reader for it, though her name is legion: the American club-woman. From the decorous pages of this volume one gets no hint that pictures are sometimes painted by carnal men who get drunk, who jab paint on coarsely with their thumbs, who swear mightily at their models and their wives and even sometimes at their patrons. Thus of Gilbert Stuart, a bit of a "souse" in his youth, whose portrait of George Washington adorns every school-building, Mrs. Bryant says genially that he "suffered from lack of money and from personal inconsistencies"!

EVEN our scenery is tamed by the dauntless Mrs. Bryant. Listen to her describing Thomas Hill's picture of Yosemite Valley, now in the Crocker Gallery in Sacramento: "The Yosemite Valley, or Grizzly Bear as the Indians named it, is one of those freaks of mother earth where suddenly, æons ago, she lowered a small part of herself down into the depths below and then became stationary, forming a wee small valley about seven miles long, and a half to two miles wide, protected by a sheer wall." Coming down through one hundred and fifty years of American painting with her bits of ladylike information, Mrs. Bryant arrives at the shrine of the late John La Farge. Here one wades through several pages of unsteady description and of guarded criticism, until the author proudly announces her discovery in New York City of one of Mr. La Farge's former models; whereupon we have an exhibi-

tion of some real enthusiasm: "It has been my good fortune while gathering personal incidents about Mr. La Farge and his 'Adoration' to find Mrs. J. Hungerford Milbank, founder of the International Order of Military Women (to develop mental and physical poise—the fundamentals towards world-peace), New York City, when a girl posed to the artist for his 'Adoration' and his 'St. John,' in the Cathedral."

THAT is perhaps, at first reading, a trifle hard to get; but for merit of a sort it is probably in the very front rank of sentences. The next sentence is somewhat easier. One can easily picture the scene: the lady-author interviewing the former lady-model while the latter indulges in refined reminiscences—and the poor, dead painter unable to defend himself. Both women, you realize, have done their bit for "art," but what both are really interested in is the "uplift" of American womanhood. Thus one day in a reminiscent mood Mrs. Milbank said:

Mentally I see again the studio in Tenth Street, and the thin, rather bent genius, which was John La Farge. La Farge liked to take down my hair and arrange it himself. He made a delightful play of it, first carefully removing my sailor hat, then drawing out the pins one by one, and watching the light in each part of the sunny mass as it fell over my shoulders. How well I remember sitting upon a low stool while he bent above me, his thin face seeming to fill out and grow radiant with the joy of the task. As my sittings were not paid affairs, the conversation often took a friendly turn. I tried to justify my neglect of art, saying I was growing to greater things by my studies in Greek philosophy. [Much discussion followed. Then Mrs. Milbank again gave a word-picture.] Like a beacon-light which has not dimmed through the years is the incident of his quietly leaving his easel and, palette on thumb, coming to stand beside me. For a moment he rested his hand upon my head, looking down into my face, and there was silence—then came his strongly prophetic words: 'Yours is more than art. You shall make good citizens.' What a tribute to the reclaiming power of women—a power that begins at the cradle but never ends.

Can nothing be done, before it is too late, to recover for America something of humanity's naïve and priceless vulgarity?

JOURNEYMAN.

## MUSIC.

### THE MOUSSORGSKY LEGEND.

FORTY years ago last March, Modeste Petrovitch Moussorgsky<sup>1</sup> died in Russia at the age of forty-two. Leaving behind him four or five operas in varying states of completion, several numbers for both chorus and orchestra, numerous piano pieces, and well over half a hundred songs, he is remembered to-day by one of the operas, "Boris Godunov," and by a dozen and a half of the songs. "Boris" is more honoured in the neglect than in the performance; barring some notable exceptions his vocal pieces are unhonoured and unsung, his piano compositions are fast rotting away in their covers, while outside of Russia not one man in five million can even so much as name his other operas.

So far as these latter compositions are concerned, the neglect of Moussorgsky is fairly comprehensible. "Khovanshchina," his last opera, was never really completed; an operatic setting of Gogol's "Marriage Broker," though planned on a more generous scale, stopped short with a single act; in a similar manner, and doubtless for an identical reason, "The Fair of Sorotchinsk" has come down to us in a fragmentary condition. Rimsky-Korsakov, it is true, remedied this defect in "Khovanshchina" by rounding it out after the composer's death and arranging the manuscript for the orchestra. Thus re-born, the work was produced in

<sup>1</sup> "Moussorgsky: The Russian Musical Nationalist." M. D. Calvo-coressi. Translated by A. Eaglefield Hull. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company.



Petrograd in 1885 and again, twelve years later, in Moscow. But in spite of this generosity on the part of the composer's indefatigable friend and editor, the opera has steadily languished. Like Moussorgsky's bold but aborted endeavour to set "Salammbô" to music, "Khovanschina" seems fated for an oblivion whose nature is not wholly iniquitous, and its operatic companions, with one exception, are preceding it hurriedly to the grave.

Towards some of Moussorgsky's other compositions, fate has been kinder. His piano pieces, of course, are with very few exceptions atrocious. Their predominating hollowness, coupled with their rhythmical complexity, which reminds one of a spider's web strung across the mouth of a cave in an effort to conceal its emptiness—such transparent faults as these explain the slender vogue of compositions whose awkward workmanship is the more surprising in that they were written by a capable pianist. On the other hand, his creations for the voice—especially such a cycle as the "Sunless Songs" and the "Songs and Dances of Death"—are as excellent as their instrumental counterparts are trivial. In these songs, indeed, Moussorgsky appears briefly in the guise of an honest musician. Without any doubt they deserve to be set at the right hand of "Boris Godunov," there to be crowned with its glory.

Thus, barring a dozen songs, a few choral excerpts from abandoned compositions, and an opera of decided beauty, Moussorgsky's work is negligible; and it might even be said of the opera that, instinct with great vitality as it is, its vitality is still, to transcribe a phrase of Coleridge, parasitical. Like much of his other work it draws heavily from the Russian folk-tune, for remarkably little of his music sprang from his own heart. Moreover, although he was a generous harvester of the crops of other men, he showed no signal skill in bringing that harvest home. Neither greatly gifted in invention nor capable of binding into one golden sheaf the scattered riches of a fertile but sprawling land, he failed, in short, both as a composer and as a compiler. For these two reasons one can not accept the statement that this Russian was a great musician. Russian he was, and a musician he occasionally could be. But the belief that his compositions are great music is an illusion founded on an ignorance equally of music in general and of the actual creations of the man himself.

It will come as no great surprise to readers of M. Calvocoressi's stimulating and informing biography that Moussorgsky stole folk-music with both hands. Yet few are fully aware of the extent of his depredations. Even so ordinarily astute a critic as Mr. Paul Rosenfeld has credited him with riches he never earned, and never pretended to earn. Speaking of "Khovanschina" and "Boris Godunov," Mr. Rosenfeld hymns, as proof of Moussorgsky's greatness, certain passages that are not Moussorgsky's at all but are the property of every Russian peasant; and if a few of such thefts are thus traceable to their source, there is slight doubt that there are others that will never be known. Indeed, one must be both a scholar and a *mushik* to be able to state exactly and authoritatively where Moussorgsky's music leaves off and the Russian people's begins.

To form a just estimate of the man's work it is fortunately unnecessary to inquire further into this matter, for it is not greatly to Moussorgsky's discredit that he made use of national themes. What arouses the critical spleen is that in appropriating such material he failed to inform it with an adequate mastery of

style. His lack of contrapuntal technique and his ignorance of the higher mathematics of the orchestra alone would not injure his musical standing. Schubert was a second-rate theorist, yet who remembers that failing at a performance of the C-Major Symphony? To poke fun at Moussorgsky, as many do, because Rimsky-Korsakov corrected his scores is therefore beside the point. What permanently handicapped the man was not ignorance; it was a chaotic and disjointed temperament. He was for ever starting things; and, as M. Calvocoressi coolly admits, he was for ever leaving them undone. No great fault in itself if it was merely for the sake of discarding inferior work, the habit nevertheless is unfortunately revealed in his completed compositions. He can not be accused of sloth. Though during the larger part of his life he was on the verge of nervous collapses his pen went courageously on; but its labours lacked direction. "Boris Godunov," even in his own mind, was never an artistic entity. He meddled with it frequently, now cutting out a chorus, again adding two or three *solis* to suit a momentary whim or the ambition of some operatic *prima donna*. One can not more aptly criticize this work, and by implication all his music, than by confessing that the opera shows it: it is magnificent in spots, but the spots are oases connected by vast deserts of sand. M. Calvocoressi admits freely that the drama of Pushkin's tale has been marred by Moussorgsky's emendations; and musically, even more than dramatically, the work lacks inevitability. It is for this reason, I think it may be asserted with confidence, that if we view "Boris" as a collection of gorgeous themes and Moussorgsky as their energetic but rhapsodic compiler, we shall arrive at a very much truer conception of the man and his music than by regarding him as a great composer and his opera as an authentic masterpiece.

In the "Sunless Songs," already mentioned, and in such a delightful vocal satire as "The Seminarist," Moussorgsky was navigating familiar waters. He crossed them without accident, one might say, because they gave him insufficient time in which to drown. But his short-windedness, while it may not have marred and perhaps may even have aided the breathless intensity of his shorter compositions, left his longer ones gasping in a state of asthmatic eloquence. I do not wish to labour the point, but I think that Moussorgsky's failings, and the failings of his over-heated admirers, can be effectually summed up by a quotation from his biographer:

All the most elementary principles of musical symmetry . . . are disdained by Moussorgsky, entirely occupied as he is with exact recording. For that reason there are sometimes great irregularities in his music, unusual aspects, but they are always justified by his care for exact truth. . . . One commentator has ridiculed a small piece of Moussorgsky, in which he counted twenty-seven changes of time in fifty-three bars; but, aided by this marvellously sensitive and faithful method of expression, which is really 'rhythm free from symmetrical restraints,' Moussorgsky achieves a marvellous exactitude and a striking depth of meaning.

Personally, I doubt it. I do not think I am unduly ridiculing a preposterously extravagant statement by lamenting, if M. Calvocoressi's theories of music are right, that Moussorgsky changed his *tempo* so infrequently. He should have reversed the process and changed his *tempo* fifty-three times in twenty-seven measures. He would then have achieved nearly four times the exactitude and depth of meaning that he did.

Nor do I believe that Moussorgsky can be permanently protected by giving his country a black eye.



What is a "nationalist" composer? M. Calvocoressi has this to say as counsel for the defence:

Russia has never produced a single first-class work which does not contain all the characteristics of 'nationality.' Those Russian musicians who repudiated the cramping effect of nationality on their creative powers, and who sought to produce by means of individualism a supreme and universal type of music, have shown no great proofs of originality.

In other words, Moussorgsky was a Russian. He did not repudiate the cramping effects of his nationality: therefore his work was first-class work and, in so far as a Russian can be, he was original. It is a bad *non sequitur* and no better for being merely hinted at. That the traditions of a country are certain to influence a composer's work is a fact which none will deny. Viewed broadly, only Germany could have given us Beethoven; only France, Claude Debussy; and only Russia, perhaps, the Russian Scriabin. But if Russia has fortunately given us more than Moussorgsky, Moussorgsky failed to complete the compliment, as Scriabin did, by giving us more than Russia.

WINTHROP PARKHURST.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS.

### "SAID THE SPIDER TO THE FLY."

SIRS: Matters of considerable moment are now being discussed at the British Imperial Conference in London, at which India is reported to be represented by two delegates. As a matter of fact, however, one of these two "representatives" chosen by the British Government to attend the conference is the Rao of Cutch, an innocent figurehead in Indian public life, completely unacquainted with Indian problems. Whenever the British Government in India is compelled to select an Indian "representative" in order to gratify the small minority of Indians who still profess to have faith in the fair promises of the British bureaucracy, the authorities wisely choose one from among the Indian princelings, some of whom may be very good sportsmen, but most of whom are sublimely ignorant of the needs and problems of modern India. The Rao of Cutch, having "a remarkable record of perfect obedience to Government," has accordingly been chosen by the British Government to voice India's needs and to represent her interests in the Council of the Empire.

Thus to all appearances India will subscribe to the programme of British imperial nationalism in exchange for the very doubtful privilege of representation in the Imperial Conference, and on her strict and conscientious adherence to the decisions of the convention, India will be advanced in her position within the Empire. This situation is rendered all the more preposterous by the fact that, at the very moment when the Imperial Conference is sitting, a segregation of all Indians resident in South Africa (who, by the way, were brought there to develop the resources of the country for the benefit of British Colonials) is contemplated by the South African Parliament, Indians in the Fiji Islands and in British Guiana are being treated as virtual slaves on the sugar plantations, and Indians are being rigorously excluded from Canada and Australia. Under such circumstances it is manifestly inconceivable that the British Government would invite any real representatives of the Indian people, who have been turned into helots in their own land and into little better than slaves in all the territories of the Empire.

In 1903, when the commercial competition of Germany became acute, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain evolved a scheme of imperial federation in order to pool the resources of the Empire. The scheme of imperial preference, now advocated, is really a development of this programme, the main object of which was to protect British industry from the inroads which were being made into it by America, Japan and Germany. India has nothing to gain and everything to lose by any such scheme of imperial preference. It will make her a dumping-ground for the surplus products of British factories, and Indian consumers will be compelled to buy at higher prices than if they had a free choice in the competitive markets of the world. A comparison of the trade-figures for 1903-4 with those of 1918-19 indicates that Indian imports from England have fallen from sixty-six per cent to forty-six per cent, and from the British Empire as a whole from seventy-five per cent to

fifty-eight per cent. This loss is due to the invasion of the Indian market by America and Japan. Fifty-three per cent of India's products now go to countries outside the British Empire. By being forced to give preference to the costlier manufactures of Britain, India will lose some of her best customers, whereas her true economic interests demand a development of trade with countries like America and Japan, an intercourse which the programme of imperial preference will seek to destroy.

India is to-day principally a producer of raw materials, but she is becoming increasingly a producer of manufactured goods, in quantities that are sufficient to supply the demands of her own market. Any scheme of imperial preference would force India to import British goods free of duty or with only a nominal duty. Already India is subjected to an excise duty of five per cent for daring to manufacture cotton goods herself, an impost which the Lancashire cotton-interests are endeavouring to increase in order to strengthen the protection they enjoy against this rising industry of India. It is easy, then, to foresee that the adoption of a policy of imperial preference will be followed by similar measures to cripple other Indian industries. The Council of the Empire apparently desires the representatives of India to sign some sort of agreement which will enable the authorities to go ahead with their schemes for the industrial exploitation of India, armed with documentary evidence of the approval of the so-called spokesmen of India. The legal fiction of India's participation in the affairs of the Empire is also preserved and strengthened by the presence of two Indians at the conference table.

As for the question of imperial defence, whatever the decision of the conference may be, it can only mean the strengthening of India's fetters and the expansion of the British Empire at the cost of Indian blood and treasure. Imperial "preparedness" is certain only to augment the economic drainage of India and to increase her helplessness.

The Indian people fully realize what the holding of this conference will mean to them. Press and public alike have protested vehemently at the choice of their so-called representatives, who are to sign a deed of humiliation and economic bondage in the name of India. The *Bombay Chronicle* of 13 May expressed the attitude of India in the following terms: "The people of India have no desire to sacrifice their own immediate interests on the altar of the Empire, which stands to them as symbolic of exploitation." I am, etc.,

INDICUS.

### A SUGGESTION FROM PROFESSOR BEARD.

SIRS: Every one interested in higher education in America will read with pleasure your editorial of 29 June on "The Vanishing University." That we have often glorified mediocrity is, alas, only too true. That we have bent our efforts to diffusing culture rather than to creating it, is also a proper subject for comment, and perhaps for lamentation. Having just returned from stricken Europe, to which so many of our educated classes turn for enlightenment, I must say, however, that if the present state of that continent is the fruit of high culture, we may profitably be spared some of the bitter harvest. Still, one can not but approve your fine definition of education and wish that America were blessed with more of that kind.

You are likewise on firm ground when you describe the origin and spirit of the mediæval university. To those beset by intellectual curiosity, there is something alluring about a picture of teachers and students freely associated, vexed by no rules for schoolboys, searching far and wide in the kingdom of the spirit. Undoubtedly the mediæval university attracted some of the ablest minds of the period, and at the same time managed to thrive without trustees or presidents. Yet we must not be deceived by stories of the great teachers like Abélard, into imagining that the old university was composed solely of men "educated" in your sense of the word. There were a dozen ignorant and inconsequent clerks for every master of enduring fame. Moreover, without taking a narrow Protestant view of the situation, one may truly say that mediæval universities made few fundamental contributions to our accepted stock of ideas. They were free in the sense that they were not managed by boards of weary business men; but trustees are not the only limitations on the human spirit. Anyone who is familiar with Bentley's long quarrel at Cambridge, and Mark Pattison's humiliation at the hands of his colleagues, knows very well that when a teacher jumps from the arms of trustees into the arms of his brethren in learning, his earthly cares are not over.

Still, I should like to see one real experiment in higher



education in the United States, along the lines you suggest. It would be a group of teachers, freely associated in the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge (two very different things), and surrounded by a band of able and zealous students. It would have no buildings, no *alumni* associations, no academic red tape. Each teacher would be free to pick his own students from among the applicants and to dismiss wasters and mediocrities on five minutes notice. Freedom of thought would be encouraged; that would of itself impose moral responsibilities upon teachers. They would not turn their chafing at the restraints of trustees into a wild and foolish chafing at the restraints of life. Such an institution would necessarily be conservative because responsible thinking, baffled by the world's complexities, never produces half-baked radicalism.

But why dream? No such fair institution will ever be created. The mediæval university has had its day. People with money are practical people. They have little faith in the unseen, the immeasurable, and the imponderable. Professors are sometimes known to hanker after loaves and fishes. Moreover, what would become of the students who risked their careers at such a school? Without degrees and academic authenticity, they could not find any place to make a living in our modern business world. In the Middle Ages they could take to the highways and beg their daily bread while passing on the torch of learning. If one attempted to get across the State of Delaware to-day, with books in his wallet and no bread in his stomach, he might get thirty lashes at the whipping-post. No one would be so humble as to do him honour; at least, until after his death.

The real teachers in American institutions, the men who have made a real impression on our thinking, who have done anything but compile, are not as many as the sands of the sea. Our institutions are conventional. Thinking is unconventional, being concerned, as it is, with time and eternity. Though conservative, in the long run, it saps the temporary structures of convention. So I am moved by your editorial to raise this question. Assuming that the mediæval university was a place where men with an intellectual mission could best deliver their message, does it follow that the modern university is such a place? For the true teacher, the restless searcher-out of all things, there is a greater forum than the narrow schoolroom with its handful of students. If he has anything to say, he can clothe it in type, release it in the lightning's flash, and send it to all climes and all ages. The voice grows old and feeble, and silence comes with the long night. The printed page may be immortal. Has not the printing-press, therefore, made the university obsolete for all except those engaged in cramming candidates for degrees? I do not venture an answer, for the matter is too delicate; but if your board of editors could devise an answer I should read it with pleasure. I am, etc.,

New York City.

CHARLES A. BEARD.

## BOOKS.

### MR. RANSOME ON RUSSIA.

MR. ARTHUR RANSOME'S new volume<sup>1</sup> is a calm recital of conditions in present-day Russia which might very well have a steadying effect upon those who view the Soviet Government with mingled hatred and terror, if they would only read it—but of course they won't. The crisis in Russia, as Mr. Ransome sees it, is identical with the crisis in Europe. The economic and industrial breakdown of the country is but the symptom of a wasting disease that has seized the whole continent. Mr. Ransome vividly describes the collapse in transportation which began before 1914; and by so doing he effectively answers the taunt of those who try to minimize the effect of the blockade when they say: "Russia exported grain to all the world, why not feed herself with it now?"

The main fact [says Mr. Ransome] in the present crisis is that Russia possesses one-fifth of the number of locomotives which in 1914 was just sufficient to maintain her railway-system in a state of efficiency which to English observers at that time was a joke. For six years she has been unable to import the necessary machinery for making engines or repairing them. Further, oil and coal have been, until recently, cut off by the civil war. . . . By making it impossible to bring food, fuel and raw material to the factories, the wreck of transport makes it impossible for Russian industry to produce even that modicum which it contributed to the general supply

of manufactured goods which the Russian peasant was accustomed to receive in exchange for his production of food. On the whole, the peasant himself eats rather more than he did before the war. But he has no matches, no salt, no clothes, no boots, no tools. . . . Clothes and such things as matches are, however, of less vital importance than tools, the lack of which is steadily reducing Russia's actual power of food-production. Before the war, Russia needed from abroad huge quantities of agricultural implements; not only machines, but simple things like axes, sickles, scythes. In 1915 her own production of these things had fallen to 15.1 per cent of her already inadequate peace-time output. In 1917 it had fallen to 2.1 per cent. The Soviet Government is making efforts to raise it, and is planning new factories exclusively for the making of these things. . . . Meanwhile, all over Russia, spades are worn out, men are ploughing with burnt staves instead of with ploughshares, scratching the surface of the ground; and instead of harrowing with a steel-spiked harrow of some weight, are brushing the ground with light constructions of wooden spikes bound together with wattles.

There are the simple facts. The mere record of the onset and progress of this creeping paralysis shows that the industrial break-down of Russia is due neither to Communism nor to the Soviet Government. In the face of this steady ruin of a great nation, all that European and American civilization could do was to add the torture of the blockade. Small wonder, then, that to Mr. Ransome (who, it may be noted, is not a Communist) the urgent, crucial necessity of the time is that the politicians and militarists who now rule in Europe shall take their hands off Russia and leave the cure of this terrible sickness to those who have the courage and energy to grapple with it. Russian *émigrés* in London, Paris and Washington can not help the Russian people. For good or ill the organizers of Russia are in the Kremlin to-day; if they are driven out, black chaos will enter in.

What the old world—strange, is it not, that this term has now come to include America?—finds most unforgivable in Communist Russia is its arrogance; the arrogance of youth. A few years ago, Russia was "a giant with feet of clay," "a bear that walked like a man," "the gendarme of Europe," "the steam-roller," something huge, and ancient, and only remotely menacing. To-day Russia, youthful, rebellious, and headstrong, is regarded by the rest of the world with terror and dismay. This proud young experimentalist, smashing all conventions, wrecking all traditions, throwing out to the four winds of heaven the secret, and hitherto sacred, archives of the diplomats—this untameable creature horrifies an old-fashioned world. So an old-fashioned world applies an old-fashioned, and always ineffective, remedy. The offender, says the old-fashioned world, must be punished. But Russia knows that she has to hold out but a little longer, for the old world is dying of decay, as all old things die. When one has been close to the revolution, as Mr. Ransome has, one knows that nothing so strong and so youthful as Russia is to-day can be destroyed by cabled lies from Helsingfors or by editorial ravings in London, Paris and New York. Just as in Ireland they can kill the Sinn Féin, but not Sinn Féin; so in Russia, blockade and intervention can kill the Bolshevik, but not his faith!

As an illustration of the tremendous hopes that nerve these people in their almost impossible task, Mr. Ransome records a conversation he had with Rykov, the President of the Supreme Council of Public Economy.

We may have to wait a long time [said Rykov] before the inevitable arrives and there is a Supreme Economic Council dealing with Europe as a single economic whole. . . . In so far as is possible, we shall have to make ourselves self-supporting, so as somehow or other to get along even if the blockade, formal or perhaps willy-nilly (imposed by the inability of the West to supply us), compels us to postpone co-operation with the rest of Europe. Every day of such postponement is one in which the resources of Europe are not being used in the most efficient manner to supply the needs not only of our own country but of all. . . . Diamonds and gold, they can have as much as they want of such rubbish; . . . diamonds and gold ornaments, the jewellery of the Tsars, we are ready to give to any king in Europe who fancies them, if he can give us some less ornamental but more useful locomotives instead. . . . Platinum is different, and we are in no hurry to part with it. . . . In platinum we have a world-monopoly, and can consequently afford to wait.

<sup>1</sup> "The Crisis in Russia." Arthur Ransome. New York: B. W. Huebsch.



One seems to hear in those last few words a hint for the blockaders. Some day, perhaps, they may find the tables turned and Russia become the blockader, exacting privileges and concessions by virtue of its monopoly in this essential metal.

Mr. Ransome pleads for consideration of the ultimate consequences of the conflict. He warns us that if the struggle continues, if angry and ignorant men persist in seeking the overthrow of the Soviet Government, the complete collapse of European and American civilization may result.

Collapse of the present Government [says Mr. Ransome] would mean at best a reproduction of the circumstances of 1917, with the difference that no intervention from without would be necessary to stimulate indiscriminate slaughter within. I say 'at best' because I think it more likely that collapse would be followed by a period of actual chaos. Any Government that followed the Communists would be faced by the same economic problem, and would have to choose between imposing measures very like those of the Communists and allowing Russia to subside into a new area for colonization.... Those who look with equanimity even on this prospect forget that the creation in Europe of a new area for colonization, a knocking out of one of the sovereign nations, will create a vacuum, and that the effort to fill this vacuum will set at loggerheads nations at present friendly, and so produce a struggle which may well do for Western Europe what Western Europe will have done for Russia.

Those who profess concern and sympathy for the fate of the Russian people would do well to ponder the warning words set down by this proved and far-seeing observer in his latest interpretation of the Russian scene.

CLARE SHERIDAN.

### ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR.

THE only improper thing about Mr. E. T. Raymond's life of Mr. Arthur James Balfour<sup>1</sup> is that it bluntly reports the ex-Premier to be seventy-three years of age. The impropriety is not precisely that which one commits when one divulges the years of a maiden aunt; it is rather the mere fact of associating senescence with a figure which, like Melchizedek, has hitherto displayed no signs of youth and is therefore expected to betray no signs of age. Mr. Balfour of course always does his best for us in this regard. Thus when he went to Paris for the Peace Conference, his first concern was to join a tennis club. The news provoked no flicker of surprise, for when Mr. Balfour is not playing with philosophy or politics or a pianoforte, it is naturally assumed that he is playing tennis. All these things he has been doing from time immemorial; and it is something of a shock to be warned that the day will arrive when Mr. Balfour may no longer be interested in these terrestrial things. In one of his poems, Francis Thompson, anticipating a happier sphere, bade us seek him "in the nurseries of heaven"; it is a judicious conjecture that we should do well to seek for Mr. Balfour in the neighbourhood of the celestial tennis courts, for since, presumably, there will be no more philosophic doubt to defend or political opponents to impale, what else, one asks despairingly, will there be for Mr. Balfour to do in the heavenly regions?

Yet let us give the veteran statesman his deserts. What game soever Mr. Balfour plays, he plays skilfully, even brilliantly. His verbal dialectic is as clever as his back-play on the courts; he performs upon the House of Commons as consummately as he is reported to do on the pianoforte. Of his great ability there can be no question. Yet despite his unique equipment, Mr. Balfour has been peculiarly sterile. "The result, then, of this concise survey of a great subject," he says in the course of his Romanes Lecture on "The Criticism of Beauty"; "is negative"; and the result of Mr. Raymond's "concise survey" of Mr. Balfour's achievement is very much of the same kind. His one positive performance appears to have been the rather dubious achievement of establishing the *entente cordiale*. For the rest, the story is one of scintillating intellectual single-stick combats or of political tight-rope walking, "leaving you," as Browning says, "vacuity."

<sup>1</sup> "A Life of Arthur James Balfour." E. T. Raymond. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Mr. Balfour has been in public life for half a century; and none of that time has been spent in anything that might be likened to obscurity. Yet he appears to have done no single thing that particularly entitles him to an abiding place in the gratitude of his fellow-countrymen. Possibly his Education Acts may in course of time be so improved as to furnish a basis for a unified system of national education; but even now, after two decades, the compromise upon which these acts were based is still bitterly resented by British nonconformity. His performances in Ireland and in the Fiscal Reform controversy were characteristically "negative"—and an adjective less generous might perhaps be more precise.

Without knowledge of Mr. Raymond's previous work, it is hard to say whether in writing this biography of Mr. Balfour he has not been dipping his pen into Mr. Lytton Strachey's inkpot. Certainly we have here something of that mordant truthfulness which gave so piquant a taste to "Eminent Victorians." But the effect is different. Mr. Strachey's achievement was to arrest a growth of legend; Mr. Raymond's is to put an existing impression into a fixing-bath. Here is a picture of Mr. Balfour painted by an artist who has firmly grasped the essential quality of his subject; and he has put it onto canvas without the bias either of dislike or favour. Mr. Raymond has used "fast colours"; and doubtless the ultimate impression of Mr. Balfour will be that which this volume conveys. It is a picture of a thoroughbred, highly-fancied "starter," which never arrived.

Mr. Balfour's newly published volume "Essays, Speculative and Political" gives a clue to the measure and the quality of the man. He is at his best in criticism; and his power shows to singular advantage in the essay on Bergson. He has a swift and sure eye for the vulnerabilities of "L'Evolution Creatrice," and his analysis is characteristically lucid and deadly. But in the essays on "Decadence" and "The Criticism of Beauty," the result is "negative" once more. He tells us how little we know about the secrets of either, and how unsure that little is; and that is about all. It is done very weightily, and in a quality of diction which few modern writers even approach; but it is surely an approach to something like effrontery to publish at this time of day (despite its graces of style and a mitigating foot-note), a twenty-five year old presidential address to the Society for Psychical Research which lacked, even when it was uttered, an idea that rose above the commonplace.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was once asked to pass judgment on a picture which its owner hoped he might praise. He did his best. "The composition is excellent," said Sir Joshua, "the chiaroscuro is very good; the colours are good—but (with an oath and a snapping of his fingers) it lacks *that*!" Mr. Balfour too, seems to have had everything but *that*!—and his life has just cancelled out. The result is "negative."

R.

### PROGRESSING BACKWARDS.

THE younger American novelists have evidently determined that literary history shall repeat itself, for they are turning away from the cheerful, conventional fiction of the day and are going back to English realism of the 'eighties when George Gissing and Mr. George Moore were young, and to French naturalism, when Zola reigned, and Huysmans had not yet taken refuge in Catholicism. The thought is not altogether encouraging to the optimists who are looking for signs of a new dawn in American fiction. For all his power, George Gissing is already more than half forgotten, while Mr. Moore lives on, not as the realistic chronicler of mummies' wives and boarding-house kitchen-maids, but as the benevolent, malicious and audacious autobiographer and Boswell of contemporary literature.

The French naturalists offer little more consolation to retrospective criticism. The Médan group, who launched

<sup>1</sup> "Essays, Speculative and Political." The Rt. Hon. Arthur James Balfour. New York: George H. Doran Company.



the movement, consisted of six men, of whom only two, Zola and Maupassant, are remembered as realists. Huysmans established his fame, not with "Marthe" and "Les Soeurs Vatarde," but with the more numerous works of which the first, "A Rebours," proclaimed in its title a radical change of direction. As for Paul Alexis, Henry Céard and Léon Hennique, whose naturalism was as profound as the neglect into which they have fallen, it would be absurd to deny that, within the peculiar limits of their genre, they have written some excellent stories. Moreover, it is apparent that neither Maupassant nor Zola, nor even the Goncourts, with their jealous concern for the beauty of words, have created a lasting tradition in their own country. The symbolists, if they did nothing else, destroyed the prestige of the photographic realists. Yet in order to find any points of comparison, it is to those writers one turns after reading the new school of American novelists.

"The Narrow House"<sup>1</sup> by Mrs. Evelyn Scott is absolutely in the mood of that little book of Huysmans, "A Vau-l'Eau," which probably only a few of his admirers have had the curiosity to read. In that story of a lonely man's sordid and futile pursuit of decent comfort, there is the same insistence upon the drab, hideous dirtiness of genteel poverty. Mrs. Scott sees all the stains on the linen, all the dirt in the finger-nails; the filth in the street. The opening scene is dusty, shabby and dishevelled; the last describes a woman dabbling in the sink; and all through is a dreary litany of leaky gutters, buzzing flies, littered papers, and furtive, slinking, timorous, unhappy people. Beneath all this belated realism runs the disjointed theme which shows that, though the author must be counted one with the most modern American novelists, she is yet but a curious echo of the naturalists of the 'eighties.

Like so many of her contemporaries, Mrs. Scott has come to the conclusion that, though Dr. Frank Crane's God may be in his heaven, all is not right with the world. The family, for one thing, is not what it seems to be in the works of Mrs. Gene Stratton-Porter. Within the narrow houses of domesticity there are foul and horrible things which sentimental romanticism succeeds in concealing with more or less success. Samuel Butler and the venerable Mr. Bernard Shaw, not to mention the distinguished author of "A Doll's House," also suggested some years ago that family happiness covers a multitude of sins against the flesh and the spirit. Mrs. Scott insists rather effectively upon the former, but the spiritual tribulations of her characters are somewhat obscured in the fragmentarist style à la Joyce, which she employs. Nevertheless, this is a first novel of considerable interest, for it emphatically stresses the emancipation of the American novel from the conventions and traditions which have bound it hitherto. Both the form and the content are a defiant refusal to conform. In the main, the heretical novelists in this country have been contented with the challenge of the matter rather than of the manner of their writing. Mrs. Scott has attempted both challenges in a fashion which promises well for her future development.

In Mr. C. Kay Scott's "Blind Mice,"<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, there are no innovations such as give a flavour of modernity to the naturalistic method of "The Narrow House." Mr. Scott follows Mr. Dreiser and the more conventional realists in accepting the common form of the novel. Like Mr. Dreiser, too, he has no compunction in monotonously repeating the same scenes, the same effects and even the same words. His conversations are as devastatingly banal as anything ever written by the author of "Sister Carrie," that wonderful exception to the subsequent rule. This has enabled facetious critics to poke elephantine fun at him, but it does not obscure the real merits of his story. Mr. Scott is also of his generation in the revolt against domestic bliss, and as he has a sense of irony he makes the love of a man for his

hateful mother-in-law the theme of the book. Mrs. Merwent is an authentic figure, carefully studied and relentlessly exposed. She has that breath of reality which, for all her realism of detail, Mrs. Scott somehow fails to infuse into that loathsome Farley family which she describes so malevolently. Conceived in a more conventional form, "Blind Mice" offers a greater temptation than "The Narrow House" to make concessions to the national demand for a happy ending. But Mr. Scott's story is resolutely pitched in the subdued key of a George Gissing, and he refuses to be lured from his purpose, in which he has succeeded without exactly writing a successful novel.

In order to appreciate Mr. Scott's virtue in this, it is only necessary to turn to Miss Eunice Tietjens's "Jake,"<sup>3</sup> which is also the story of the disruption of family life through excessive domestic devotion. This gushing and sentimental tale of Jake's marriage and of his mother's destructive egotism is related in the conversational style of a loquacious secretary of a woman's club. The actual subject, if handled by either Mrs. or Mr. Scott would be interesting, perhaps illuminating. But all one can feel about Jake is that he was unfortunate in his wife, cursed in his mother and damned in his biographer.

ERNEST BOYD.

### RESPECTABLE POETRY.

THE most extraordinary and disconcerting fact about modern England is that she naïvely combines an abysmal Philistine sentiment with the worship of purely external successfulness, and liberally seasons both of these deplorable traits with a sprinkling of intellectual self-sufficiency. That England was not always thus is very evident; but from the outset of the nineteenth century, all her prizes, intellectual or otherwise, have gone to those who conformed to the great unwritten law of Philistine respectability, while all the pains and penalties have been equally the portion of those who derided that law and its concomitants. Since the French Revolution, the secret of England's greatness has been to refuse to admit that revolutions can possibly happen—or, perhaps, they may happen, but they are extremely "bad form." It isn't "sporting" or "gentlemanly" to have them. In this spirit, England neglected Blake, drove Shelley and Byron into exile, submitted Keats's poetry to the tender mercies of Jeffrey, pensioned Southey and Wordsworth and drove Coleridge to opium. In the same spirit, she sat down to enjoy the reflection of her comfortable virtues in the verse of Browning and Tennyson, and to deride Swinburne and the "naughty 'nineties." In the same spirit, she produces to-day the poetry of the Georgians.

The voluminosity of Mr. Freeman<sup>4</sup> is no less typical of the Georgian spirit than the glib platitudes of Mr. Drinkwater, the half-concealed internal hankerings of Mr. Squire, the marble inanities of Messrs. Shanks or Turner. Like all these other writers, Mr. Freeman potters about in his poetical garden, pausing to bestow a pat upon the head of his favourite dog, or to throw a glance of ecstasy at his beech trees because they are so "English"—or should I say, British? He philanders in a subfusc, semi-Platonic fashion with the problem of sex; he follows with an internal satisfaction the movements of his own mind. Far from him are the bitter wrestlings with truth of Thomas Hardy, the barbaric anfractuosités of Doughty. Although he is but a young man, he has already bestowed upon the world a volume of three hundred pages, containing nearly two hundred poems, each one of which conforms exactly to the Georgian recipe.

There is no earthly reason why Mr. Freeman should stop here. There is no reason why he should not write, if he chooses, three thousand, or three hundred thousand pages, containing poems exactly similar to those he has already done. The great merit of the Georgian method is precisely that it has made intellectual progress unnecessary, indeed impossible. To be perfect in the Georgian

<sup>1</sup> "The Narrow House." Evelyn Scott. New York: Boni and Liveright.

<sup>2</sup> "Blind Mice." C. Kay Scott. New York: George H. Doran Company.

<sup>3</sup> "Jake." Eunice Tietjens. New York: Boni and Liveright.

<sup>4</sup> "Poems, New and Old." John Freeman. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.



sense it is only necessary that one need be oblivious to everything in the world except the fineness of one's own peculiarly English sentiments. Ireland or Vienna or even the ripples upon the surface of British industry need scarcely concern one at all. One's beech tree will accept without protest all the poems one chooses to make about it. One can go on writing for ever, unless one is at bottom concerned with deeper problems than could ever disturb Mr. John Freeman.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER.

#### SHORTER NOTICES.

THE late Bertram Smith is ill served by his publisher's unwise vaunt that "Days of Discovery" and "Running Wild" are "permanent classics of childhood," for the reader is naturally not only disappointed but even irritated when he finds how far they fall short of "The Golden Age" and "Alice." Mr. Smith, who contributed to *Punch* and the *Manchester Guardian* and published two novels of schoolboy life and two volumes on "Caravanning," was evidently a likable, wholesome type of Englishman and has a pleasant, friendly way of dealing with that fascinating sub-world of children; but his work never achieves real distinction in style or substance. It is mildly amusing, recognizably sound in observation, moderately well written, and otherwise open to Laodicean faint praise, but we can not escape noticing the absence of true verve, insight, vision, charm, and the like, which are indispensably requisite to work that is genuinely first rate in this kind. One feels some compunction in commenting severely upon such innocent efforts to please, for there is no reason why these essays should fail to find a cordial welcome in many not unduly literary homes. In the last analysis, however, they are like the diaries or private letters which one's relatives and friends extol as far too clever to be kept within the family circle, and yet which somehow never seem half so good when actually printed.

L. M.

THE question which Mr. W. J. Locke propounds in "The Mountebank" is this: Does a Captain of Infantry, adored and trusted by his men, from whose ranks he rose by reason of latent qualities of initiative, command and inspiration, contentedly return to the selling of women's stockings in a dry-goods store and to the humiliating restrictions and conditions of the salesman's life? He has but two trades, both of which he knows profoundly; the selling of hosiery and the waging of war. As he can no longer wage war, he sells hosiery. But does he do it contentedly? Will not the war-change he has suffered cause nostalgias, revolts? Will it bring into his resumed activities a new purpose or more than the old lassitude? In attempting to answer this question Mr. Locke has taken for his theme the problem of a clown who, during the war, proves himself a brilliant soldier and becomes a Brigadier-General. With the armistice it goes without saying that the British Government has no further use for his services in any shape or form. So the Brigadier who, of course, has evolved on to a different plane, is forced back again into the abyss of clowndom, for him a worse hell than ever the war was. Eventually he is released by a master twist on the part of the author and the ending is a happy one. "The Mountebank" has all, and more than, the charm of "The Bowed Vagabond." The characters are not only alive but vastly entertaining. In his portrait of the hero, Lackaday, however, Mr. Locke seems to argue that war is beneficial: he gives only the reactions of the satisfied individual, winning decorations, rapid promotion and immense happiness of mind. War is shown to be a sort of picnic. He neglects entirely the point of view of the other five million destined to languish miserably, or be destroyed in mud, blood and hell-fire. As one side of the medal Andrew Lackaday and all that he stands for is well drawn, so well drawn that it is all the more a matter of regret that Mr. Locke has left the other side a complete blank. For the purpose of an entertaining novel it was not necessary, perhaps, to show that other side; but for the purpose of a genuine book it was.

A. H. G.

ONE has only to read the work of an accepted nineteenth-century minor poet to realize commensurably how microscopically small are the minimal poeticules of to-day. Frederic W. H. Myers, whose collected poems<sup>2</sup> have just been published,

gave astonishing early promise, possessed an unmistakable literary gift, and produced a little true poetry; but the bulk of his work is merely accomplished verse—correct, fluent, negligible. He is an orthodox Tennysonian who did not "arrive": yet even at his worst, how far superior he is to our typical young moderns who not only do not "arrive" but neither intelligibly begin nor coherently proceed. His life-long devotion to the great Greek and Roman poets and to Tennyson gave him a sense of form and an artistic conscience about such things as restraint, substance, and finish which, united to his indubitable talent and vital purpose, may secure for him ultimately a higher rank in the minor scale than our present extreme disrelish for Tennysonianism can concede; but, in any case, he is always sure of inclusion in any representative Victorian anthology. His masterpiece, "Saint Paul," is religious poetry of a noble order; and the reader, whatever his creed or lack of one, who can not yield to the authentic power of this poem, is certainly to be pitied. The early date of this high-water mark—1867: *at* 24—viewed in relation to Myers's absorption in psychical research which began shortly thereafter, has led some admirers to claim for him the honours of a martyr to science who deliberately sacrificed a major poet's career in order to serve what he conceived to be mankind's direst need, viz., the scientific demonstration of human existence after death; but all the evidence goes to show that his gift was primarily critical, not poetic, and that his best prose work, such as "Essays Classical and Modern" and "Wordsworth," would always have outranked his poetry. Indeed, even in this present volume, the uncollected prose is more important than all but some half-dozen of the collected poems; for the editor has given us Myers's heroic autobiography, his masterly essay on Shelley, his fine letter on Tennyson, and his brilliant critique of Poe, and these truly admirable productions can hardly be excelled in their special fields. Mrs. Myers has performed a great service in publishing this volume.

L. M.

#### EX LIBRIS.

SURELY, if any man deserves the name of prophet it is Samuel Butler, who, in "Erewhon," was the first to foresee the development the machine would take, its gradual and ruthless conquest over man, and the ultimate battle between man and the machine for supremacy. It will be remembered that in Butler's satire no mercy is shown in the war between the machinists and the anti-machinists, that the machine is wholly eliminated as a factor in human existence; while a few broken-down relics are preserved in the Erewhonian museum to serve as a warning against any relapse into a state of mechanistic barbarism.

SINCE Butler's day, and especially since 1914, many books and essays have been written on the subject, differing, however, from the conclusions arrived at by the author of "Erewhon" in one very essential point. In Butler's narrative the protagonists can not possibly achieve a compromise; the implication is made sufficiently clear that society can not have machines and live among them and escape having a mechanical mind, a mechanical existence and a mechanical psychology. The assumption is that society as a whole, no more than an individual, can go on living a double life without its sins ultimately finding it out. You can not have about you the complexity of the machine and think, live and act simply; finally, you can not have society's impulses towards creation thwarted by a mechanical order without these impulses turning towards destruction: the same energy that creates also destroys. Now, nothing is more symptomatic of our time than psycho-analysis; and if the thwartings, repressions and suppressions of an individual can be measured, what would happen if the same psycho-analytic test were applied on a large scale to the whole of society? Would it be so unreasonable if an historian, equipped with psychological insight, were to trace the origin of the war to the invention of the machine, which is at the bottom of our industrial system, its commercial rivalries and all the inevitable consequences? Would it not be interesting, for that matter, if some one were to write a history of the effects merely of the invention of spindles on Western civilization, showing how far it

<sup>1</sup> "Days of Discovery." "Running Wild." Bertram Smith. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company.

<sup>2</sup> "The Mountebank." W. J. Locke. New York: John Lane Company.

<sup>3</sup> "Collected Poems. With Autobiographical and Critical Fragments." F. W. H. Myers. Edited by his wife. New York: The Macmillan Co.



contributed to bring about our own Civil War? Butler's idea leads to many possibilities of this kind.

YET most popular writers of to-day, inevitably in agreement as they are with the indictment of the machine set forth in "Erewhon," part company with Butler in regard to the presumed incompatibility of the machine with a reasonable and humane civilization. Novelists like Messrs. Wells and Galsworthy have expressed the opinion that the machine, which has temporarily gone out of hand, need not remain the master and can be made the servant of society. To the same camp belongs Dr. Walter Rathenau, whose lately expressed views are especially interesting because, being "a super-businessman, master of applied science, technician, inventor, manufacturer, organizer and financier" (as he has been described), he is peculiarly a product of his age—and of Germany, which, more than any other country, has made of scientific efficiency a fetish. In his book, "Von Kommenden Dingen," lately published in England under the title of "In Days to Come," he expresses a deep revulsion against what he calls the "age of mechanization"; and he explains that his revulsion is based on the fact that this mechanization has impressed on every factor in life its own mean values of weighing, measuring and calculating, its own wholly materialistic and anti-spiritual qualities: "created by a materialistic will with the aid of material means," he says, "it pushes earthly activities in the opposite direction to spirituality." This, he asserts further, is coercive, inimical to freedom, and provocative of enmity and strife. Nevertheless, Dr. Rathenau optimistically suggests that the remedy is not to do away with it, but to spiritualize it. His opinion is that this can be done through an ethical transformation, through a moral regeneration of society and the abandonment of the appetites and passions that sustained the old order. There is an implication here of society manifesting a higher will, which shall enable it to rise superior to its environment, the environment of the machine. And this brings us back to the position from which we started: Are society and the machine compatible? Can man's soul escape the meshes of the infinitely complex network of environment created by machinery? Unhappily, whether man can conquer his own creation is as hard a question to answer as the old riddle about the priority of the hen or the egg.

MAN is essentially a hoping animal, and a good many persons will doubtless take comfort in the transcendental views of Messrs. Wells and Rathenau. For a cool, dispassionate statement of facts, unprejudiced by theories with regard to the future, one should go to the artist rather than to the sociologist. And it is hardly strange that novelists from countries as wide apart as America and Russia should have written stories dealing with the mechanization of life, arriving at conclusions the difference between which is not to be judged by the number of geographical miles that separate their authors. Familiar, of course, to many readers is Sherwood Anderson's "Poor White," with its fertile implications in regard to the thwarting of the creative life to which the machine has subjected American society. Of even more general significance are the opening chapters of Count Alexis Tolstoy's new novel, the title of which may be translated as "Quest of Sorrow" and which is at present running serially in *Sovremenniya Zapiski* (*Contemporary Annals*), a Russian periodical published by émigrés in Paris. Brilliant as are the pictures it presents of life in Petrograd immediately preceding the war, of even greater interest are the author's reflections on the politics created by the mechanized age, which inevitably led to the great catastrophe. History may have one or many explanations of the diplomatic negotiations of July, 1914, but the artist-psychologist reduces the whole thing to a more simple formula and arrives at a deduction dealing with the first, and not the ultimate, causes.

According to all suppositions [says Count Tolstoy] the evil will emanate from the German Emperor, but his diplomats asserted upon their conscience that the war was desired by Russia at all costs; at the same time the Russian

Minister of Foreign Affairs exerted every effort to avert any possible ultimatum, etc. etc. The cause of this lack of lucidity was primarily due to the fact that the population of at least four great Powers wanted war, not the war which came, but a war which would free them from the hopelessly growing quantity of articles. During the half-century of European peace the government mechanisms, military and despotic by nature, having passed into a peaceful condition, made their problem not the happiness of each individual and the development of his spiritual life toward good and love, but the production, in the shortest possible time, of the greatest quantity of articles. These articles were often of no use either to him who made them, or to him who forced their making, or even to him who bought them. Man had to adapt himself to the incredibly complex world-factory, had to become, in fact, a cog in the mechanism. He was forced to eliminate his best desires and to repress his noblest feelings; otherwise he would have suffocated in his predestined, perpetual groove. And these desires and feelings passed into a malignant condition. Even those who gathered the harvest in this field of labour were, perhaps more than others, in the power of articles and figures. . . .

This human degradation appeared to be deepest in Germany. The quantity of manufactured articles there was incredible. Human beings were being borne down under the burden of civilization, and it seemed that if the country were not unburdened the nation would suffocate. But history has not given us instances of unburdening except through war.

In war there was a double joy—the destruction of articles and the passing of the individual out of a numbered rubric on to a free field. War was psychologically desired and inevitable.

COUNT TOLSTOY, however, does something else besides demonstrating the connexion between mechanization and the late war. Like Dr. Rathenau, he shows that there was hardly a human activity which was not affected by the process. The most interesting aspect of the matter is that the arts were the first to experience the purely destructive results of mechanization: the Futurists saw the visible world in fragments; the dissolution among the intellectuals had, in fact, begun; the dissolution *en masse* came with the war. In Count Tolstoy's story, when the charming heroine, Darya, discovers that the ultra-modern poet Bezsonoff, has seduced her married sister, her eyes falling on a Futurist picture in the drawing-room, begin, for the first time, to grasp its meaning:

It was a drawing of a naked woman, in a dingy red colour, and gave the appearance of her hide having been torn off. The mouth was on one side; there was no nose—in its place was a small triangular hole; the head was square—with a glued-on rag, of real material. The legs, resembling logs, were on hinges. One hand held a flower. The other details were horrible. And the most horrible thing of all was the corner in which she sat, bandy-legged; it was a dull, dingy-coloured corner, such as one might find in hell. The picture was called "Love," and Katya called it the contemporary Venus de Milo.

That was why Katya was so proud of this ugly woman, thought Darya. 'She's like that herself now—with a flower in the corner.'

In short, we were living, and are still living, in Erewhon, before the anti-machinists, urged on by their thinkers, won their terrible fight against the machinists who had created a reaction that "had very nearly proved successful." And now some of the thinkers and artists of the world are writing the same book all over again: for the time being, "Erewhon" remains the Bible on the subject. In this connexion, one hears that Samuel Butler is extremely popular in France just now.

JOHN CURNOS.

THE following recent books are recommended to the notice of readers of the *Freeman*:

"Japanese Impressions," by Paul-Louis Couchoud. With an introduction by Anatole France. New York: John Lane Company.

"Books on the Table," by Edmund Gosse. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Glimpses of Bengal," by Rabindranath Tagore. New York: The Macmillan Company.

"Queen Victoria," by Lytton Strachey. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

"Notes and Reviews," by Henry James. Cambridge: Dunster House.



LEST our readers believe that we receive only complimentary letters we print this from a subscriber who means well but is slightly bewildered. We think he really meant to praise the FREEMAN, but feared we were being spoiled by flattery.

You are disappointing. Folks call you "highbrow" and yet I find you referring smugly to the American blockade of Russia, which the well-informed, if not the highbrows and radicals, know is now a myth. You admit you know nothing of practical journalism, which explains your charge that "news-papers are not primarily newspapers." Why don't you know something of practical journalism now that you pretend to be running a practical journal? What excuse have you, especially in the light of your statement that "no hurry and stress can condone the slovenliness of speaking of a Moslem when one means a Jew or of a radical when one means a liberal or a socialist." You also put it down that our government spends 92 per cent of its total revenue for military purposes, but I believe you will have a hard time producing "figgers" to show what you assert so unqualifiedly.

You insist that "the FREEMAN has come out frankly as a radical paper," but this sentence affords about the only indication that you are radical. I fear, dear FREEMAN, that your radicalism consists of wearing a gold horse radish root as a scarf pin. You are not radical enough to do much good or ill, and you promote the dissemination of misinformation. I suspect you of making a living at radicalism and of eating at good restaurants. I half believe you wear yellow gloves and hate to be caught with them off. But, of course, you are highbrow, for you quote at every tenth line from Artemus Ward, whom most Americans do not know, and you pass up O. Henry, who was thrice more "radical" than you.

I am not "agin" you, for I like your comments that "the 'good American' to-day is certainly nearer an automaton than anything else flesh and blood has ever known," and your suggestion to Mr. Galsworthy that "a lesser number of aunts and uncles in the Forsyte family might occasionally clarify matters in the reader's mind." I fear I shall have to extend my subscription to check up on my impression that you are just a nice tame radical, as safe as the scowling joss on the family mantel.

W. M. K.

Washington, D. C.

*A well-known American returning home after an absence of several weeks reads the copies of the Freeman that await him and feels moved to write to one of the paper's editors.*

"IN some respects, however, I share your attitude of a sweet philosopher. Returning to the accumulated literature, I find myself more impressed than I probably should have been if it had come to me in the usual matter of course fashion. It is a pleasure to say that I am delighted with your point of view. You are a true critic. Severe for those who understand, but not scolding for those who prefer to find fault. Your comments on Edison's questionnaire left me chuckling. I do not know what your ancestry is, but you have certainly mastered English. I do not mean only the language, but the manner of treatment, which is delicious. I wish our school systems might profit by your comments, and learn to make a distinction between information which should be carried in the head, and information which should be kept on the shelves within reach. I am sometimes almost tempted to pride myself on my ignorance of facts which others parade as information. It is my theory that every head has a certain number of pigeon-holes, and in stuffing them full the selective system should be applied with great discretion. They will hold only a certain amount, and a clear distinction between quality and quantity must be intelligently made at an early date if we are to have any hope of surviving, fairly equipped with information, a sense of humour and, above all, a sense of proportion."

DON'T wait until Autumn to start your friends in the FREEMAN habit; introduce them now when a hot-weather antidote is so badly needed. The heat and humidity do not interfere with the quality of the paper nor with the continued enthusiasm of our readers. With their help we expect to increase our circulation to such an extent that before Christmas the FREEMAN will be in tens of thousands of homes and libraries which now lack that messenger of wisdom and joy.

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